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Honasan in secret talks with gov't, says coaccused

By Marlen Ranoa
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

We can't be like RP, says Singapore premier

e-mail: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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DIVERS install the country's first ceramic coral reefs in El Nido, Palawan, and only the second of its kind in the world.

Senate ready to use power vs gov't execs

'No blanket claim of executive privilege'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine O. Avendaño

IT LOOKS LIKE THE NORBERTO GONZALES episode will soon be repeated in the Senate.

The possibility of more Cabinet members and functionaries being cited for contempt and detained followed Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye's announcement that the Palace would invoke executive privilege in "rogue investigations" by "bloodthirsty senators."

Maj. Gen. Jose Honrado, Armed Forces spokesperson, also pointed to provisions against the release of information in the 1989 Code of Ethics and Conduct of Public Officials.

Bunye and Honrado issued the statements in response to announcements in the Senate that hearings on the "Hello Garci" controversy, the $500-million NorthRail project and other alleged irregularities would resume when Congress reconvenes on May 15.

The hearings had been stalled after President Macapagal-Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 464 last September prohibiting government and military officials from attending congressional hearings without her authorization.

Last week, the Supreme Court upheld the right of Congress to conduct inquiries in aid of legislation in a decision that declared parts of EO 464 unconstitutional.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday warned that the Senate would use its contempt powers to compel officials to answer questions at the resumption of various committee hearings.

"There can be no blanket claim of executive privilege," said Pangilinan. "Malacañang, like all other government offices, must account for its acts and refusal to be held accountable for its actions under the guise of invoking executive privilege is a violation of the Constitution."

Lacson said Congress according to an official request for executive privilege would be "situational, not presumptive and unilateral."

"The Senate has its own rules to adhere to when such an invocation (of executive privilege) is unjustifiably used by the invited resource person or persons," Lacson said.

"The committee members acting as a collegial body, not the re-

SENATE/A22

GMA, Senate brace for fresh showdowns

By Amanda Doronila

THE SUPREME COURT DECISION striking down key portions of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Executive Order No. 464 that banned executive department officials from appearing in congressional inquiries without her permission has opened the gates to the resumption of inquiries into controversial issues, including allegations she rigged the 2004 election.

ANALYSIS

In a 14-0 decision, the high court upheld the right of Congress to compel the appearance of executive department officials in legislative inquiries but it voided only certain portions of EO 464, thereby not giving the Senate a sweeping victory in its petition that asked the court to declare EO 464 null and void for being unconstitutional.

The ruling issued on April 20 also conceded certain points to the executive department, holding that Congress could compel officials to testify in inquiries "in aid of legislation," saying that "Congress undoubtedly has a right of information from the executive branch whenever it is sought in aid of legislation."

But the court qualified this right with the ruling that "if the executive branch withholds such information on the ground that it is privileged, it must so assert it and state the reason therefor and why it must be respected."

The court made a distinction between testi-

GMA/A22

Ceramic reefs boost growth of El Nido's sea rainforests

By Blanche S. Rivera

RESORTS INTERNATIONAL GOING ON UNDER WATER in El Nido, a world-renowned dive site and threatened fishing ground.

Environmentalists have installed ceramic coral reefs—or EcoReefs—near Tres Marias, a cluster of limestone cliffs jutting out of Bacuit Bay to boost the growth of coral reefs, dubbed the rainforests of the sea.

On April 1, the El Nido Foundation and Seacology, a US-based nonprofit organization with conservation projects in 80 islands and 40 countries, brought in 180 modules of EcoReefs as part of its reef restoration program.

The world's first artificial reef designed to rehabilitate damaged corals, EcoReefs are made of ceramic stoneware that is ideal for

CERAMIC/A21

'NO TO DEREGULATION'

Reimpose oil price controls, gov't urged

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE SURGE IN WORLD OIL prices has given fresh impetus to calls for the government to impose price controls to protect oil firms in the country from increasing pump prices as well.

"The government can't forever plead with oil companies to implement price adjustments on a staggered basis. It's like asking them [oil firms] to kill us subtly," party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano said in a phone interview yesterday.

Mariano and fellow Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran are pushing for the scrapping of Republic Act No. 8479, the downstream oil deregulation law, which they claim has institutionalized the oil cartel.

Downstream oil industry refers to the business of importing, exporting, re-exporting, shipping, transporting, processing, refining, storing, distributing, marketing and selling of crude oil, gasoline, diesel, liquefied petroleum gas, kerosene and other petroleum products.

Mariano and Beltran are the principal authors of House Bill No. 1865 that seeks to nationalize the oil industry.

They also supported the plan of transport groups such as Piston to stage a series of transport strikes to force President Macapagal-Arroyo to scrap the law.

Beltran said the enactment of a P125 daily minimum wage increase would be an apt government response to ease the impact of high fuel prices on consumers.

With oil prices hitting an all-time high of $75.35 a barrel at the New York Mercantile Exchange on Friday (Saturday in Manila), the call of the party-list lawmakers for a regulated oil industry appears to be getting the support of congressional leaders.

Representatives Monico Puentevella of Bacolod City and Exequiel Javier of Antique said they favored a review of the oil deregulation law.

REIMPOSE/A21

'FIREFLIES' ON WHEELS

Some 3,000 bikers wearing costumes join Sunday's "Tour of the Fireflies," a 50-km ride around five cities and towns of Metro Manila to promote cycling as a sustainable means of transportation.

High gas prices spur US investments in biofuels

SOMETIMES, RICK OSBOR STILL HEARS the beer bottles clanking in the shadows of the old Miller brewing plant in Fulton, New York, where he worked until the plant closed more than a decade ago.

Now he is the engineering director of a project aiming to turn the ghostly, 170-hectare complex into the Northeast's first ethanol production plant, churning biofuel out of the massive vats that once brewed Miller Lite.

With gas costing $3 a gallon in many parts of the United States and much of the oil-producing world in turmoil, the lure of homegrown fuel is a powerful one.

New York Gov. George E. Pataki is intent on making the state the vanguard of ethanol production in the Northeast, and the Fulton plant is one of the projects in the region that is slowly

HIGH/A22

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Leftist killings part of AFP plan, says militant leader

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Luige A. del Puerto, Manila

LUCENA CITY—A TOP OFFICIAL of Bayan Muna yesterday charged that the wave of killings of militants was in compliance with "Oplan Bantay Laya," a purported military campaign to destroy the communist New People's Army and other leftist groups within five years' time.

"This is the last year of that oplan. And in the assessment of the military, they are still way below the target that's why the AFP has shifted to fast-track mode, thus, there were waves of killings," Rodante de Castro, Bayan-Tayabas municipal deputy secretary general, told the Inquirer by phone.

De Castro made the claim after a Bayan Muna member in Gumaca, Nakar, Quezon, and a relative who believed to belong to the group were shot dead by motorcycle-riding gunmen on Saturday.

The killings brought to 11 the number of militants murdered in different parts of the country since the start of the year, and to at least 110 the number killed since 2001.

In local Season of the Philippines spokesperson Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado confirmed the AFP had an "Oplan Bantay Laya" but this deals with the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army and had nothing to do with legal leftist organizations.

Honrado would not, however, discuss details "because these are operational plans."

NPA threat

"Yes, we have an Oplan Bantay Laya but this deals or addresses the CPP-NPA threat. We don't include leftist organizations," he said.

"These are just accusations. Anyone can make any accusation under the sun."

Herb Casilo, secretary general of Kampanyan Southern Tagalog, identified the victims of Saturday's attack as Marlene Balisi and her brother, Virgilio.

Casilo cited his earlier report, which gave Marlene's last name as Sanchez.

She said Marlina Balisi was killed as a Bayan Muna member. "We're still checking the affiliation of her brother, but most probably he was also a Bayan Muna member," she said in a phone interview.

She said the killers have also beaten up Balisi's common-law husband, Leroy Sanchez.

"We have reports that Leroy's utility-in-law was also abducted and is still missing," Casilo said.

Dual personality?

Casilo said that Sanchez was both the village chief of police in Barangay Magdalo and a Bayan Muna district leader in northern Quezon. Magdalo is a remote barrio of Infanta Makat at the foot of the Sierra Madre mountains.

General Nakar police chief Dolgie Bernal confirmed the killings but said the police did not receive any report of an abduction related to the incidents.

"From the reports of the barangay Magdalo are not aware of the supposed abduction," he said.

Suspected killers

He said they based on a police investigation, a group of heavily armed men barged into the victims' house at Balisi's at around 2 a.m., tied her to a house post and shot her once in the head.

Her brother was found dead in a nearby bed also with a single shot in the head. His hands were tied behind his back.

Bernal said Sanchez had gone into hiding and had yet to talk to the police.

Casilo claimed members of the Army's 16th Infantry Battalion were the "most likely suspects."

Army Maj. Jose Bravo, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Command, said the command had no report on the incident.

"Coming from the left, it's probably another black smear campaign against the military," he said of Casilo's claim.

Present proof

Honrado challenged the militants to support their allegations.

"If they have evidence, they should file a case in court, and see will help them prosecute it," Honrado said.

"They should specify[y] who among [the militants] did it," he said, adding that a general accusation without proof was unfair to the whole military organization.

Dr. Castro said Balisi was the fifth Bayan Muna member killed by suspected military hit men since President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed office in 2001.

She was the seventh Bayan Muna member killed this year, Dr. Castro said.

'Documents prove military monitoring'

MILITANTS YESTERDAY SAID they had documents proving that the monitoring of above-ground militant organizations had been apparently adopted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as a guideline during the last three years.

The documents showed the prevailing view in the military that left-leaning but legal organizations were allies and fronts of the communist insurgency movement, the Kilusang Mag-buhold ng Pilipinas (Kompil) 2 said.

The BHB a vocal critic of the Arroyo administration, claimed in a statement in the military provided them with the documents.

It said one of the documents stated that the "paucity of information" on about groups allegedly aligned with the insurgency "has more or less skewed analyses and distorted perspectives with regard to their role in actively advancing the revolutionary struggle of the left."

BHB information officer Carl Ma said a recent crackdown on activists, including the filing of rebellion charges against some lawmakers "confirm the existence of these documents."

Not ours, says AFP

A military spokesperson also refused the leftist group's claims and challenged it to produce the documents so their authenticity could be established.

"Many such conspiracies have stopped up before, and I tell you they are not true," said Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado, chief of the AFP Civil Security Group.

"It is not government policy to direct the AFP or the PNP to harass [or] intimidate legal organizations. It is not government policy to repress them," he said.

Lack of information

One of the sources cited as [illegible] Operations" and dated September 2004, the BHB said.

"This Headquarters has taken due notice of the paucity of information regarding mass-based groups that have been long aligned with or purported to be front organizations of the Communist Terrorist Movement (CTM)," said the supposed memorandum, a copy of which was provided to the Inquirer.

The "lack, more or less, skewed analyses and distorted perspectives with regard to their role in actively advancing the revolutionary struggle of the left," it said.

Extreme caution

It added, "In view of the foregoing, you are hereby directed to adopt a limited system of target research, focusing mainly on all sectoral organizations in your respective AOR [area of responsibility] that are known to be actual fronts of the CTM and other groups with similar inclinations," the supposed military document said.

But the same memo said "extreme caution" should be observed in doing the research since "the objects and subjects of this undertaking are mostly legal organizations duly recognized not only by the local community or public at large, but also by the National Government itself."

Ruling on EO hasn't strained ties with GMA, says Chief Justice

PANGANIBAN

CAPIZNEWS, PAMPANGA—Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban said the Supreme Court's decision on Executive Order No. 464 had not strained his relationship with President Macapagal-Arroyo, who appointed him to the post in December.

"All turmoil calls [it hasn't because] we are the judiciary. We don't speak of politics," Panganiban told the Inquirer here yesterday.

The Chief Justice also did not express any regret over last Thursday's ruling that upheld the right of Congress to compel officials of the executive branch to testify in its inquiries in aid of legislation.

Decisions based on facts

"We make decisions based on the facts and issues in every case and we are not particularly sure nor mind who wins or loses. That's not the question that we answer. The question we answer is what is right," he said.

In Isabela, Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, said police officials were duly-bound to attend congressional inquiries following the high court's decision on EO 464.

No friendship

Asked about the possible political backlash of the court's decision on Mr. Arroyo, Panganiban said: "We are not deciding this on the basis of friendship, neither on the basis of relationships. We are deciding this on the basis of law."

"We are independent in the sense that we decide cases on the basis of what is the law, not on who is involved," he added.

Honored son

Yesterday, the Candaba government gave Panganiban, a native of the town, a tribute.

He left this farming town, the refuge of his family during the Japanese occupation, where he was barely 18 years old and moved to poverty.

Yesterday, the 69-year-old Chief Justice was welcomed by townmates with affection.

His homecoming came with a single message. Pete Ildit can make it in life if they have a strong faith in God and if they strive hard.

During a program, Panganiban was conferred the Mass Dumanding Candaboso Award by the town council.

Grew up in poverty

"I am elated that my townmates have received me. I'm very happy that the town recognizes me. You see, I feel constrain with them because I grew up in poverty and difficulties," he said.

In Manila where the entire family went to rebuild their lives after World War II, the young Panganiban shined shoes, sold newspapers, took odd jobs and sought to school to get himself an education.

"I believe that's a good reason for that people in Candaba and Pampanga can rise above their poverty and difficulties," he said. Tessie Oreña, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Wilfredo Visayo, Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Cops propose car-tracking plan's revival

THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT GROUP (TMG) has proposed the revival of an intercepted clearance system that was scrapped off two years ago to curb the movement of stolen or carjacked vehicles from Metro Manila to the provinces and vice versa.

The TMG, a police unit that goes after carjacking syndicates, also proposed that the Philippines adopt an engine-sequel marking the identity of vehicles and determining whether they were stolen or not.

"If you remember two years ago the clearance system was lifted because of certain policy directives. We found that when it was lifted, the car thieves found an easy way to bring vehicles from Metro Manila to the Visayas and Mindanao," said TMG director Chief Supt. Revil Pay.

Suspected stolen cars were also seen being brought from other urban centers in the archipelago to the capital, he said.

Under the proposed system, however, they said only private cars would be required to get a transshipment clearance from the TMG. Buses and trucks would be exempted from the scheme.

The TMG will also push for the adoption of the vehicle identification number (VIN) system to ascertain the identity of a car.

The VIN, embossed on lead, is found near the dashboard and windshield of newer types of vehicles.

But explained that this was costly according to the group, and even easier to determine if it had been tampered with, compared to the chassis and engine numbers, which are located in areas of a vehicle that are difficult to reach. (The chassis number is located under the car and the engine number, under the hood.)

In the Philippines, the motor and chassis numbers, along with the plate number and the physical attributes, are used to identify a car.

But under this system, potential car buyers cannot determine whether these numbers had been tampered with or not, according to the...

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Archbishop wants STL out of Pampanga

CAPAS—ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ORO does not want the Small Town Lottery (STL) to operate in Pampanga and has instructed the archdiocesan Social Action Center of Pampanga (Sacep) to seek the cancellation of the license obtained by a private company to operate STL in the province.

However, chair of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Episcopal Commission on Family and Life, said that while the 6/49-type lotto (lotto) was legal, "we do not approve of such arrangements."

According to him, STL would not offer decent jobs to thousands of displaced "jueteng" collectors and would also result in the unfair culture of robbery or chance rather than on hard work.

"A life that is full, that promotes authentic human development should be the vision of the government. I hope this is the orientation and direction of our government so that the quality of life of the people would be improved," Arturo told the reporters here on Sunday.

"Our stand is that there should be other sources of good jobs. Although STL) is legal, we still that a legal is moral," he said.

He said he was confident that barrios and jueteng collectors in Pampanga could cope without the illegal numbers game. Hilong he said, had proven that Kapampangans have the good traits and guts to make it in life.

He said Sacep, as the Church's social justice arm, would look for possible alternatives on how to face this challenge in our archdiocese."

San Luis Duty obtained a license from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office to run the STL in Metropolis 21 towns and in the capital, the City of San Fernando.

The first, however, has not started operations to the consternation of the displaced jueteng collectors.

Rufino Guiniano Oas, the member of displaced jueteng collectors throughout Pampanga could reach 25,000.

The provincial board has not passed a resolution approving the operations of STL in Pampanga.

Nonetheless, when President Macapagal-Arroyo publicly acknowledged was one of her spiritual advisers, she disagreed with the government's move that STL was undertaken in jueteng, as illegal numbers game that the government and the Catholic Church have failed to stop for decades.

Sandra Orozco, PDG/Central Luzon/Sun

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Honasan in secret talks with gov't, says coaccused

[illegible] as spokesman in Southern Tagalog, retired Col. Ernesto Maclaslas said Honasan told him in a recent phone talk that he had agreed to enter into "negotiations" with some administration representatives.

Maclaslas said he was not sure who initiated the talks and what the subject was.

"There are some initiatives (for negotiations). We do not know if these came from Gen. (Hermogenes) Esperon (Presidential chief of staff) Mike Defensor or (Executive) Secretary Raul Gonzalez. But I understand there are backdoor negotiations," Maclaslas said.

"Mediamen are being discussed now. Depending on the terms of these meditators, the senator will act accordingly," he added.

Defensor says no talks

Recalled by the Inquirer, Defensor denied there were "back-channel contacts with Honasan."

"There is no back-channeling with Gringo. If there is going to be any back-channeling to be done, it's going to be handled by me or Butz Gonzalez," Defensor said, referring to the national security adviser.

Defensor said President Macapagal-Arroyo's political, security and military advisers were "clear" on the issue of Honasan and other military adventurists.

"We have drawn the line and we will not back-channel," he said. "If he is innocent, he has to face the charges. If he is guilty, he has to be punished."

A hardline stance

Defensor added: "We're taking a hardline stand because we don't want to encourage military adventurism ... We're not afraid of military adventurists in the chance."

He said it was difficult to be involved in back-channel negotiations "because everything is on the legal table, there is a process to be followed."

Maclaslas ruled out a surrender by Honasan as part of the negotiations.

He also said members of his group would never allow themselves to be arrested.

He won't succumb

"Knowing Honasan, he will not succumb [to pressure]. He is a principled man. He's gone through all kinds of crises," Maclaslas said.

Earlier, former senator Honasan, who is now in hiding from the time a warrant for his arrest was issued by a Makati Regional Trial Court in February on rebellion charges stemming from the Oakwood mutiny almost three years ago.

The offense has been moving from place to place in recent years. He has also filed a leave of absence as spokesperson of the Honasan-led Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI).

Birthday wishes

But Maclaslas said he was in constant communication with Honasan through mobile phone.

He even showed the Inquirer a text message with a wish for him on his 60th birthday on June 2 apparently sent by Honasan.

"He regularly thanks us over the airwaves. All of us are in constant communication with each other. He spearheaded all our legal moves," Maclaslas said.

Four other people, including PGBI secretary general George Dalisdis, have also been ordered arrested by the court.

Maclaslas stressed that Honasan had not left the country.

Who is the broker?

When asked who could be helping Honasan in the supposed back-channel talks, Maclaslas said it was a distant uncle of Honasan who was still in active government service.

Asked if Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile could be involved in the negotiations, Maclaslas said: "He's a good [ex. (Honasan)] respects the good senator."

Maclaslas lambasted the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police for offering bounties for their arrest.

He said the DILG and the PNP were acting like judges and executioners in the cases against them.

Where is justice?

The DILG has approved a P5-million reward for Honasan's arrest. A P500,000 reward has also been announced for any information on Maclaslas's whereabouts.

"Issuing a bounty on our heads is no different from saying that we are guilty. Due judicial system says anybody is presumed innocent unless proven otherwise," he said.

Maclaslas also said: "The court has not arraigned us. There was no preliminary investigation. Where is justice there?"

He also slammed the PNP plan to include their pictures in a rogues' gallery of wanted persons.

"We are not hardened criminals. That is a clear injustice," he lamented.

The government has allotted a total of P8 million for the rewards on Honasan's head.

"So the money included in the budget of the DILG? Is the money really intended as a reward? Is the DILG allowed to use the people's money as a reward?" he asked. With a report from Cherlie Ann G. Avendaño

Guardians seek fair trial

OLONGAPO CITY—SOME 1,000 MEMBERS of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. yesterday rallied on President Macapagal-Arroyo to give former Sen. Gregorio Honasan and other PGBI leaders a fair trial on rebellion and coup charges.

They passed a resolution to clear rifles during their annual convention and election of officers held in Columba City attended by members from Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Quezon.

Honasan is the group's acknowledged grand supreme and founder.

"[We] respectfully appeal to [the President] to avoid our grand supreme and our two brothers [retired Col. Eduardo Maclaslas and PGBI secretary general George Dalisdis] the right to due process and extend them the benefit of an impartial justice," the group said in a resolution.

Maclaslas, chair of the PGBI in Region 4A, said their group never acknowledged illegal methods in effecting changes in the government.

"Our grand supreme ruled us to contribute with our livelihood programs for our brothers and other members to countless personal payments. He will not be swayed by the baseless accusations against our leaders," Valenzuela said. —Marlen Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

We can't be like RP . . .

From page A1

"If you don't have the law of defense, you would be like the United States whose people say not-like things about the president and it can't be proved," Lee, 54, was quoted as saying at the sidelines of a community event.

"Or it will be like the Philippines where people say terrible things about the president. She can't sue," he said.

Lawyers for the prime minister and his father, Lee Hsien Yang, who currently holds the title of minister mentor in his son's Cabinet, said their clients were defamed by the articles published in a recent newsletter of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP).

The articles implied Lee was corrupt and was perpetrating a corrupt political system set up by his father, Singapore's independence leader and former prime minister, to benefit the political elite, the lawyers said.

Lee and his father had told SDP secretary general Chee Soon Juan and 11 other party members to apologize and pay damages by Tuesday for linking them to corruption or face legal action.

The apology must also be published in two newspapers by Thursday.

"If we do not act and the lies and defamation are repeated throughout and in election rallies and spread around, I think the government's reputation goes down," Lee said.

Chee, who has been reindicted to several legal skirmishes with the ruling People's Action Party, does see plan to apologize and will "contest the case vehemently," his lawyer M. Ravi told Agence France-Presse on Sunday.

The 43-year-old opposition leader is also facing a separate suit for the May 6 polls because he was declared bankrupt in February for failing to pay S$500,000 (US$3 6,000 or $1.2 million) to the elder Lee and former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong for remarks that Chee had made in the 2001 elections.

Bankrupt persons cannot run for public office under Singapore laws.

The elder Lee and other leaders of the PAP which has ruled Singapore since independence in 1965, have a history of suing their political opponents and media critics. They argue they do so to protect their reputations. AFP

Correction

IN THE APRIL 13 issue, a front-page story—"Judge pluffs cites symbol of protest"—misstated that the author, Prof. Rosario C. Lontoc, had a Ph.D. in English. The website of the University of the Philippines College of Creative Writing says that Lontoc holds a Ph.D. in Philippine Studies from UP and is a professor at the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature at the same university. She has published two anthologies of Filipino-Chinese short and authored two short story collections—"Nasa mga Hasina" and "Monkey."

Readers may send their suggestions for correction of factual errors in writing to the Star Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue Extension, Makati City, fax No. 897-07-05 or e-mail star_desk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Letter Editor Tina Arceo-Dumlao at e-mail address tinadumlao@inquirer.com.ph or fax No. 897-0570-98. Attn: Reader's Advocate (40 allow number to dial) 8000 Local 342.

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Subic rape victim's lawyer vows to fight raps downgrade

By Terry V. Quiamzon

THE PRIVATE LAWYER OF THE woman who accused four US Marines of rape vowed to oppose the expected downgrading of the criminal charges against three of the accused.

Evalyn Ermac said on Friday she would file an opposition to the government prosecution panel's planned modification of the criminal information against the American servicemen.

The amendment would adopt a Department of Justice (DOJ) resolution dropping the charge of rape against three of the Marines, naming them as accessories instead of principals.

"We will file an opposition to the motion amending the information, downgrading the charges [against the three] to accessory. We will definitely oppose it because we believe it is legally and factually incorrect," Ermac told reporters after checking in Friday.

"We have to recognize that it's the city prosecutor who has control and supervision over the prosecution of this crime. However, the private complainant, also has the right to be heard, and we are the victim," she said.

The newly assembled prosecution panel, however, said it would welcome the opposition.

"That's for her [to] respond because if they believe that the resolution is not to their satisfaction, they could oppose [it]. There are instances that the complainant has an independent right... There are certain aspects of the case that they can take action [on] independently," said Makati City Prosecutor Felicisimo Angi, supervised of the prosecution panel.

Judge Benjamin Pozon of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139 had set the arraignment of the four accused—Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, G/Sgt. Chad Carpenter and Lance Cpl. Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis—for Friday afternoon.

The four, who have remained in the custody of US authorities by virtue of the Visiting Forces Agreement, are accused of violating the complaint filed by a 22-year-old Filipino woman, who alleged that the servicemen raped her on Nov. 1 last year in a rotating van at the Subic Bay Freeport.

The court, however, has yet to order resignation of the DOJ's resolution turning only Smith as the principal accused, for which he may face life imprisonment if convicted. Hence, the court still has at hand the original case, where all four are principals.

Not guilty, says general to perjury charge

FORMER ARMED FORCES OF THE Philippines chief of staff Gen. Lisandro Abadía (ret.) has entered a not guilty plea to the perjury charge filed against him by the Office of the Special Prosecutor before the Sandiganbayan First Division.

Abadía was arraigned on Tuesday after the antigraft court denied his motion to defer his arraignment.

Abadía's lawyer tried to prevent his arraignment by questioning the authenticity of the prosecution's copy of the retired general's 1993 Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net worth (SALN).

The antigraft court, however, agreed with prosecutor Ms. Janice Hidalgo-Arcilla-Angeles that the grounds invoked by Abadía for deferment was immaterial and ordered his arraignment.

Hidalgo said the case involved Abadía's 1992 SALN and not his 1993 SALN.

Records showed that Abadía, on April 20, 1993, attested that his income for 1992 included proceeds from the sale of real property amounting to P2.33 million.

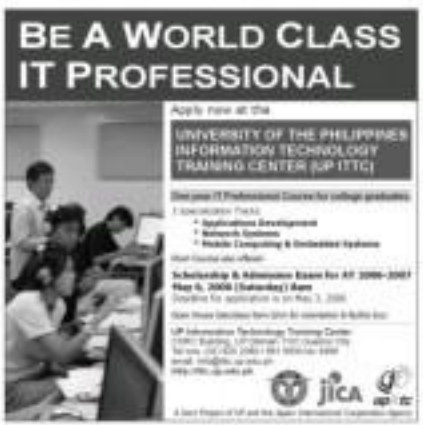
Government prosecutors said no proof was presented to show he had earned the money from the sale.

Abadía was first charged with perjury, or violation of Article 183 of the Revised Penal Code.

Aside from the charge, Abadía is being a P11.2-million forfeiture case in the Sandiganbayan.

Bail of P5,000 was recommended by prosecutor for his temporary release.

Acheen F. Flores



MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2006

Luz quits DepEd

BACOLOD CITY—JUAN MIGUEL "MIKO" LUZ has resigned as education undersecretary for finance effective April 25.

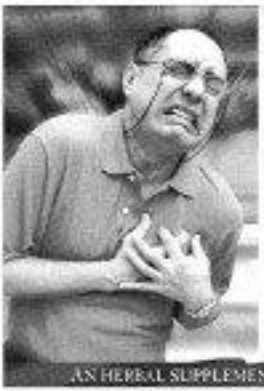
Luz said he was resigning to take on the presidency of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, an international non-governmental organization.

"Over the past four years, the Department of Education has been transformed into one of the cleanest government agencies. Let us work to maintain quality education in our schools and speak out against corruption," he said.

Luz's tenure at DepEd was marked by controversy after he refused to honor three government checks on fund-for-scholarship program of a pre-administration congressmen in 2003. He had said honoring the checks would have been against the law.

Prior to his DepEd job, Luz was associate professor at the Asian Institute of Management and headed AIM's Center for Corporate Responsibility. He also served as executive director of the Philippine Business for Social Progress, the largest developmental NGO in the country.

Cecile P. Contreras, PDI Visayas Bureau



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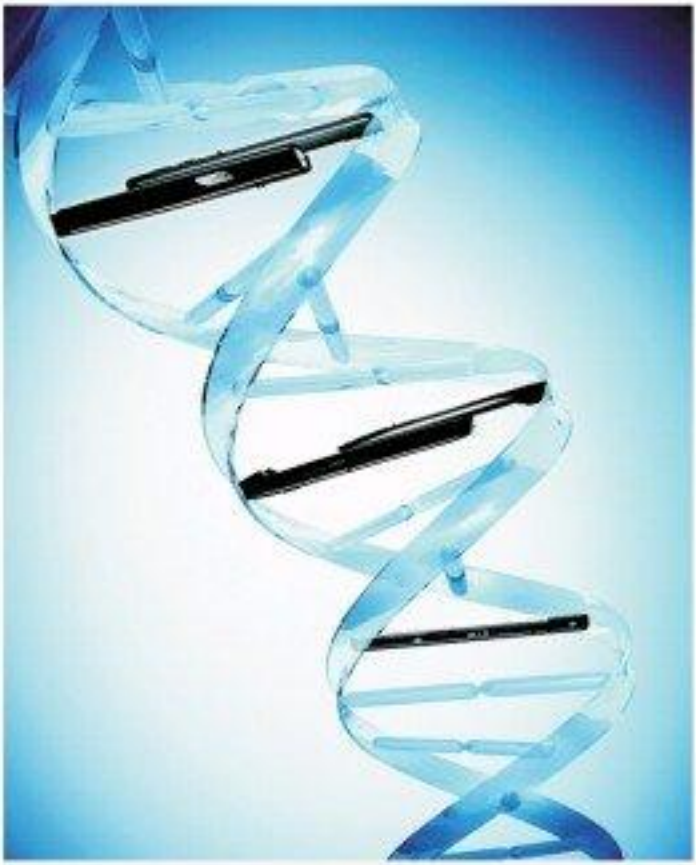

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Chavit broke gag rule, says Erap lawyer

By Nelson Flores
FORMER PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada's lawyer Jose Flaminiano said Sorsogon Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson violated the sub judice rule by commenting on the testimony of the ousted President.

Flaminiano's statement was in reaction to Singson's claim that Estrada commanded himself on Wednesday when he testified that the Ilocos governor gave a P1.2-million check to his son by actress Lorna Tolentino.

The sub judice rule prohibits both defense and prosecution lawyers and witnesses, including reporters, from making comments on a case's merits.

In a press statement, Singson pointed out that Estrada had earlier claimed, through his court-appointed lawyer, the late Persiquer Cruz's sis, that the check was payment for money owed Estrada's wife, Laarni Enriquez, who is a known jeweler.

Singson further said that Cruz had purchased a diamond ring from Enriquez, Estrada's mistress, for Rachel Ilongpon, who is now his wife.

"When Governor Singson said it is not true. He is violating the sub judice rule by making comments on the case," Flaminiano said in reaction to Ilocos Sur City chief prosecutor, also.

He said Estrada could not have contradicted himself to open court because the former President has not previously taken the stand except last month when he testified in the Sandiganbayan on his plunder case.

Flaminiano said that Estrada has not made any statements on the matters even during the early stages of his plunder trial and thus could not have contradicted himself.

Flaminiano explained that Cruz-Ilo's testimony was made during the cross-examination of a prosecution witness.

"In a cross-examination, state-witnesses could make suggestions or leading questions to which the witness answers that what the defense testified was not be-cause he was suggesting some facts that was favorable to somebody himself," Flaminiano said.

"That statement was elicited to test Singson's credibility," Flaminiano added.

Meanwhile, Estrada lawyer Retire Rodrigues warned that Estrada's witnesses were strengthened his defense because it indemnified his credibility description of Singson as having committed perjury.

"It was Governor Singson's testimony that was shattered when he claimed that he gave the amount on Dec. 22 as his contribution to the birthday gift of jewelry for Mr. Laarni Enriquez, when her birthday falls on the 22nd of September," Rodriguez said.

Chavez bucks Marcos deal

FORMER SOLICITOR General Frank Chavez vowed yesterday to oppose any move by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) to forge a settlement with the Marcoses.

"It is an absolute, travesty of justice, and a distribution of the duty and a betrayal of the Filipino people," he said.

In an interview with the reporters, Chavez said there is not a "jumpstonewall bar" on any deal between the Marcoses and the government. Aside from that, a settlement will favour only the rich and will deny the just PCGG officials had entered to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses.

"The PCGG has no moral ascendancy to negotiate for the Marcoses since it is part of the administration that has been labeled by graft and corruption. It should be reminded that it is the Marcoses are 20 years of hard work, Haughtyspun, wants yet, PAL worked hard for it," Chavez said.

If the PCGG indeed agrees to enter a deal with the Marcoses and submits it to the courts for approval, Chavez said he would file contempt of court charges against the PCGG for violating the Supreme Court's 1998 decision.

"There are things [stolen] cannot buy. He must consider our valiant wars. It is giving permanent immunities in governments. In the future, any official who commits graft can just invoke the Marcos formula," Chavez said. "It is a shame. We have lost our right to be informed of corruption," Alexis Pajot.

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3	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	30,000.00
4	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	35,000.00
5	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	40,000.00
6	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	45,000.00
7	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	50,000.00
8	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	55,000.00
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12	Desktop Computer Set (Complete with Accessories)	75,000.00
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Workers to press for wage hike as oil prices soar

By Leila B. Salaverria

WORKERS WILL MARK PRESS FOR A wage hike on Labor Day now even as prices of basic goods and services are expected to go up in the wake of the latest spikes in crude oil prices in the world market.

Kilusang Mayo Uno chair Elmer Labog yesterday openly reminded the call for a "long overdue" legislated wage hike in the light of the rising oil prices, saying the present minimum wage was not enough to meet workers.

On Friday, crude oil prices rose to an all-time high of over $75 a barrel.

The higher oil prices prompted oil companies operating in the Philippines to increase gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by another 50 centavos.

"On Labor Day, the legislated wage hike should again be one of the major issues we will push. We've been asking for it for long a time. It's long overdue," Labog said in a phone interview.

The IMU has been campaigning for a legislated P125 across-the-board increase to the daily minimum wage.

Labog also said President Macapagal-Arroyo should have considered the wage hike bill as a top priority instead of such measures as the antiterrorism bill and increase like Charter change.

Urgent bill

"With the rise in the prices of oil and basic commodities, the wage hike bill should have been the one declared urgent. Instead of thinking of the workers' welfare, the told Congress that the antiterrorism bill was urgent. That bill could even be used against us," Labog said.

Labor groups have questioned certain provisions in the antiterror bill that they said could be used to crack down on militant groups involved in labor disputes.

The KMU chair also said increases benefits given to workers like the withholding tax exemption for minimum wage earners were not enough to ease their burdens given the continually rising cost of living.

Labog also said the P20-wage increase granted last year to minimum wage earners in the private sector was too small.

Oil price controls

Meanwhile, another militant group said Makabayang Alyansi Laban sa Kahirapan (Malaka) should implement oil price controls to cushion the impact of rising oil prices on the public.

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) claimed that the parent companies of Shell, Petron and Caltex—the three biggest oil companies in the Philippines—were involved in raising the price of oil.

"It is high time the government imposes price controls and pushes for controlled procurement to immediately cushion the impact of soaring prices of petroleum products and stop the big Three from gaining super profits courtesy of their parent companies' massive speculation campaign to jack up global oil prices," the group said in a statement.

No supply shortage

Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap, citing research by the Ibon Foundation, said there was no shortage of supplies in the global oil market and added that global production had increased by 100,000 barrels per day since February.

Hicap said oil companies and their agents had capitalized on the growing tension in Iran to justify the increase in the prices of petroleum products.

Pamalakaya supported that oil price controls and a consolidated procurement of petroleum products be imposed during an eight-month period starting May this year.

It said the eight-month period would enable Congress to repeal the Oil Deregulation Act and prepare the country for the nationalization of the oil industry.

It also accused of a political backlash from increasing oil prices.

"A situation of unbridled oil price increases, if not abated, will force the Filipino people to engage President Macapagal-Arroyo and her cartel cronies into a major political showdown beginning May 1," Pamalakaya said.

Palace won't hesitate on nat'l emergency, says Defensor

By Cynthia D. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY WARNED IT would not hesitate to institute a state of emergency should the May 1 rallies which would reportedly be instigated by left and right wing forces escalate into armed violence.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor issued the warning after renegade military officers listed their plans to launch a fresh wave of destabilization moves against the government.

"I would like to remind them that while we have no plans to declare a state of emergency, that option is always there, especially if there is a threat of armed violence, particularly in the National Capital Region," said Defensor in an interview.

Malacañang is bracing for what military intelligence reports claimed was a plot by the leftist rightist alliance to mobilize up to half a million protesters who would march on Mendiola calling on Labor Day, the fifth anniversary of the failed Edsa III people power launched by backers of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

On Friday, nine fugitive Army officers—Lt. Lt. Jimmy Sarmiento and Capt. Nathaniel Rabonza—linked in a TV interview that they would continue their fight and would be making their presence felt in the coming days.

On Feb. 24, President Macapagal-Arroyo imposed a state of national emergency through Proclamation No. 1017 ostensibly to avert an attempt reprising that was launched by military and leftist rebels at the height of the celebration of Edsa I. The President lifted the order a week later.

Defensor appealed to fugitive ex-Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and his group of renegade soldiers, who have been tagged as originators of the plot, to come forward and settle their score with the government. (See related story on Page A2.)

"We are in constant touch with their lawyers and we have no problem settling the issue peacefully," said Defensor.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, April 24, 2006
2nd Week of Easter
Feria or Optional Memorial

1st Reading: Acts 4:32-35
Gospel: John 3:1-8

Among the Pharisees there was a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God to teach us, for no one can perform miraculous signs like yours unless God is with him."

Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above."

Nicodemus said, "How can this be? How can a grown man? Who could go back to his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: 'You must be born again from above.'

The wind blows where it pleases and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Commentary:

When the Spirit has been given, the disciples now rejoice to keep speaking of Jesus the risen Lord and they don't even stop on the crowds. They speak the truth about evil, injustice, murder (death penalty), and they know of some of the same reactions that Jesus knew but they also know of some of the saving power of the Spirit that came to them again and again. This is the final experience of what Jesus sought to share with Nicodemus in order to his fear. This is being born again, without fear, living the truth and sincerity with the risen Lord.

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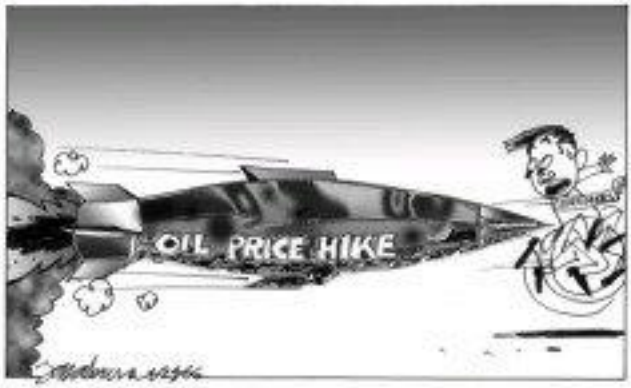
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 23 No. 195



Don't lose it

THE SUPREME COURT DECISION DECLARING two provisions of Executive Order 464 unconstitutional presents the public with the opportunity to fully resolve the President's crisis of legitimacy. But we must make clear: The ruling does not constitute a license for the Senate—where the opposition or President Macapagal-Arroyo is concentrated—to wrest power on the democratic polity.

EDITORIAL The decision should not be interpreted, in the words of administration congressman and Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin, as the first sign of an "open season" on administration officials and allies.

It certainly does not mean that the high court has done the work of the opposition in of those who want to hold the President to a strict accounting.

Reality check. According to the surveys conducted since the Hello Garci scandal erupted last June, public opinion about the President's culpability in the alleged election fraud has been remarkably steady. After an initial period of doubt, a majority of Filipinos are now convinced that election fraud did take place, and that the President was involved in it.

And yet, there is—there has been—no significant outrage in the streets, no sign that yet another Rounds of People Power is imminent. Many reasons have been offered to explain this outrage gap; whenever the reason, it is a reality that opposition politicians must take fully into account.

If a majority of the public already believes that the 2004 elections were deeply flawed, surely it is not looking for more proof. We have written many times about the leviathan fund scandal, so give only one example, and we still continue to write about it, as more sordid details emerge. But we are under no illusion that it is this scandal, or others like it, that will finally drive people into the streets.

In fact, we should all realize that, given the state of Philippine politics at the turn of the millennium, *leverage does not necessarily lead to action.*

Does this mean we should let things be and, in the words of those who support the President, *move on?*

Not at all. We should continue the necessary work of holding all public officials to account, including the President. We should continue the necessary work of feeding the President's crisis of legitimacy squarely in the eye. We should, not least, continue the necessary work of asking the tough questions.

But unless the opposition does not believe other sectors of society also have a role to play in this "necessary work," opposition politicians must conduct themselves differently. Their role must be to win public interest for the process our democratic polity has to rediscover, in order to resolve the political crisis.

One distinctive feature of the Supreme Court ruling, written by Associate Justice Conchita Carpio Morales, is its permissive approach to the legal issues at hand. It keeps an even keel all throughout, and deploys arguments in such a way that even Palace apologists can read the finding as favoring the administration. Of course, the fact that the court decided unanimously is the persuasive factor par excellence. But the decision's careful balancing act must have helped win support from other justices, and recommends it to almost everyone in the public square.

The opposition must therefore use the ruling as an opportunity to build public consensus about the way we proceed from now on. The political theater of senators bewildering witnesses must come to an end. The spectacle of senators coming in late to hearings and repeating questions already asked must no longer be inflicted on the public. Not least, the practice of senators using the extensive power of the contempt citation as a punitive instrument, as in the case of the (admittedly frustrating) secretary of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, must stop. The democratic project is first about process, before it is about power.

Post-464, the public has the chance to show the nation a way out of the political crisis. The opposition should follow it.

Gringo Honasan at Kapihan today

ONE PROJECT THAT THE PHILIPPINES needs desperately is a railway system. The Philippine government's biggest mistake was to allow the Philippine National Railways to deteriorate to its present pitiful state. We were seduced by falsehood: Airports in lot are railway system easier, and to build more roads instead—as that the American automotive companies could make more money in addition to.

The American auto did not a big disservice. They could not have won the great American West without the railroad. All the densely populated countries in the world rely on the railroad as a primary means of transportation. So do the countries with the biggest land masses, such as China, India and Russia. Continental Europe has an extensive rail network spanning several countries. Even the United States and Germany, which pioneered the freeways and the automobile, respectively, grew and prospered on the railroad. Japan and railroads allow for the quick transport of a great deal of cargo and people but at the least expense.

We need to have an operating rail line from San Fernando, La Union in the north to Legazpi, Albay in the south, until the 1960s. Gloria Macapagal—a native gal back then, whose father Diosdado was the President of the Philippines—used to take the train with her family up to Tuguegarao whenever they would ride their vacation in Baguio. Now, the trek in the north is no more and the slow train in the south runs only until Quezon.

The DNR has been dying for a long time for some of our officials paid any attention to it. None we have confided that we can't do without a railroad. Philippine transporting people and goods is much slower and more expensive, as practically now with the skyrocketing prices and with so many checkpoints to pass through, each one exacting its pound of flesh.

Putting up a railroad is very expensive, and the Philippines is not the only country in the United States, the richest country in the world, is not going to afford. Which is not surprising. After all, it was the car who burnt as into re-planting our railway system.

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

Luckily, here comes China—now the maker of the fastest train in the world (it's no longer Japan)—offering us a loan, at the lowest interest rate, for the Northrail project that will run from Manila to Clark Air Base in Pampanga.

The Northrail will provide fast (120 km/hour) and reliable mass transportation for hundreds of thousands of passengers and goods between Metro Manila and Central and Northern Luzon; and between several military bases. Once here, both countries will also special economic and tourism zones (Subic Bay/Clark Special Economic Zone, Subic and Poro Point in La Union). Operating at 3-minute intervals, it can decongest Metro Manila of its burning population and of its heavy load and all traffic. Once the international airport is transferred to Clark, trains can quickly and comfortably transport air passengers, thinking it at Manila in their places in Clark.)

Moreover, trains are safer, faster, more economical (\$4/liter and ecologically friendly. They also use less land area. The Northrail project will provide thousands of jobs, and once completed, it can accommodate 344,745 passengers in its first year of operation. In its 30th year, the Northrail is projected to serve 303,193 passengers per day. The Northrail will take around \$421 million to construct.

But it was the very beginning, there was opposition to the Northrail loan publication, and—in an irony of ironies—from squatters who have no right at all to the right-of-way of the railway system, which they have illegally occupying. And yet, they have the temerity to demand that the land be given to them permanently.

Some politicians have jumped on their bandwagon and filed cases on behalf of the squatters—despite the fact that, under very clear existing laws, they have no right to the land and in any financial loss. Never before, the government in a financing down to raise developed resettlement villages. Those who choose to go back to their home provinces are given P50,000 per family as financial help.

These relocation villages, located near their former homes, have been provided with water supply, electricity, sewerage systems and concrete roads—amenities that they never enjoyed in their disaster along the tracks. Schools and health centers are also being provided. These facilities for landowners are costing the taxpayers billions of pesos.

The amortization for a house and lot in the relocation sites is payable in 20 to 30 years—P200 a month for the first five years, and P300 a month from the sixth to the 20th year. Not really a bad deal, are squatters still better off in their disorganized lives in the streets?

Second bottom, think of this: Those who are working in Metro Manila can get home, eat a decent and quick meals of transportation, on a wide, open place blessed with plenty of fresh air. And they don't have to bear the congestion in the city.

Politicians say that the project is overpriced, that it was not submitted for public bidding.

The answer to that are first, the Northrail is a double-track system, not like the present single-track system of the PNR. That could only double the cost. So, for the lack of public bidding, the China loan is a government-to-government contract signed by the Department of Finance and the China Export/Import Bank, a state-owned Chinese financing institution. Under the contract, China has the right to designate the prime contractor for the project. China demanded that it be given this prerogative.

* * *

At this morning's Kapihan sa Manila Bay, former senator Honasan and Congressman Gringo Honasan will hold a press conference to dispute the charges against him and to speak out his mind on the many issues now before the country.

Shining hour, too

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I WAS TEMPTED TO CONGRATULATE THE Supreme Court's decision to junk EO 464 with Manuel Villar's excuse in getting Congress to impeach four some years ago, and call it the Supreme Court's "shining hour." But there seems to be quite a difference. Villar's effort was brilliant and courageous. How he got a pro-Erap Congress to back the Chief Executive showed huge political acumen, and how he got to push something distasteful and never-ended before against a president whose popularity this country had never known knows bolder showed bigger balls. The Supreme Court has, merely shown common sense.

As with most things the GMA regime has done, EO 464 was a done-better as for to it: criminal mischief never committed." It had none. As Fr. Joaquin Bernas has said, the Incoherence of EO 464 was patent even to his first year students in law class. I will go further and say that the Drummers of EO 464 was patent even to the moviegoers in my neighborhood, who can gauge nightly among the room, clubbing themselves silly and arguing excitedly about everything under the sun, to nowhere else. The image that comes to mind is a priest telling a congregation to shut up, and being obliged to repeat the admonition three times, the second volume needless are taped. "If anyone has any objection to this marriage, speak up or forever be silent." And hearing no objection, proceeds to say, "I now pronounce you man and wife."

The first hurdle was to get the issue before a legal one, it was always a political one. It was never about substance, it was always about power. The real debate was not whether the government lawyers would be able to make a case for EO 464 in court, the debate was whether the Court, like many other institutions of this country, would still exist to serve or keep what was left of it. The Court decided to keep what was left of it. In the scheme of things, the justices did not do anything extraordinary; they merely did the obvious. They did not do anything adventurous; they merely did the commonsensical. They were not did anything heroic; they merely did what needed to be done.

But back here things politics in this country that merely doing the obvious, the commonsensical and what needs to be done must take on the aspect of an accomplishment deserving of applause. Such have things politics in this country that merely doing what is decent, logical and sensible must nonetheless seem supernatural or overzeous, deserving of admiration the attitude of greatness. That was how it was during Marcos' time, the scale of wrongness being such, as to turn the most ordinary good deed into extraordinary heroism, in their wisdom, the Supreme Court was emphasized last week when it failed to put an end to an iniquity—or, a patent illegality—that has held sway in the country for a while. It was the Court's shining hour too.

Exemplarily so, since the justices ruled to a man, or woman, that the EO 464 was unconstitutional. Not one of them bothered to defend the indefensible. I had half-expected the ruling would be close—vote tomorrow, which has plagued virtually every institution of this country, from the judicial system to the building inspectors to defend a tottering castle or Palace. I had even half-expected EO 464 to be upheld. That no one defended it, well—who knows?—maybe, the justices attended the same seminar GMA did. One that defined for people as flawless good and evil, but unlike her, perfected how it.

But let us think to bring out the cheerpapers, let us remember what all this chaos is merely to bring us back to square one. As well, before square one. Sen. Francisco Tatad said it. Col. Alexander Balutan are still facing court martial for defying EO 464 (you're not plunged into the heart of democracy) which should have never existed in the first place. And Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga's firemanchot finding team—the only thing truthful there is the word "vice," nothing else is—has inexplicably found General Hermogenes Esperon, Gudani, Calimlim and Roy Kyamko innocent of rigging the 2004 elections in favor of GMA. Mayuga's explanation was drastic: "No one of the witnesses testified on any direct knowledge whether or not they participated in any election fraud." Truly, it makes you think of a priest asking a congregation with lips on their mouths to speak up if they have any objection to a marriage or forever be silent.

Indeed, we still have cops routinely breaking up rallies at a "calibrated preemptive" to prevent. We have GMA ignoring the Supreme Court ruling that the Cha-cha ban on enabling law. We have Brad Gutierrez still trying to intimidate media, my friend Bill Esposo (speaker admits Mike Arroyo has filed a libel case against me) now has a leaked case against him, which crudely denies him his freedom to such like bad shrewd. We have then The New York Times has noted GMA's drift toward dictatorship to power corruption and on illegitimate rule. We have quite a way before we can simply put back in square one.

In that said, the Supreme Court ruling on EO 464 offers the glimpse of hope that we, like the only in the "Wizard of Oz," can find our way home. In the principle, it restricts "Presidential fear" on the GMA regime, as her wanted allies in Congress were thought such to the quality of their minds that ignoring the fact on the much clouded issues in them as misleading evil upon their minds. In that very sense, it restores a proper perspective on things. The problem is not the Charter, or its clauses. The truth about the presidential system has been openly expressed, the truth about the Constitution has been violently suppressed. My thanks to the justices of the Court for drawing attention where attention is due.

Maybe it's not time to open the champagne yet. But some very good red wine will do.

Can she? Or can she not?

THE RIGHT GRANT OF COMMUTATION TO death convicts has stirred a hornet's nest. While some cheer it, others criticize it as an act of political opportunism, even defiance directed at both Congress and the Supreme Court. There is need to sort out the various claims. But my conclusion is that she can!

First of all, let it be said that a commutation of sentence can only be given to those whose sentences have become final. It does not apply to those whose cases are still on appeal. Hence, less chance for the appeal sound to benefit from the grant of commutation.

Secondly, what the President granted was not a pardon. It was a commutation of death sentences to life imprisonment. It is therefore not entered in the Book of Pardons and will not be recorded. Life in our prisons is by no means a picnic. Try it!

Thirdly, there is no question about the President's power to commute death sentences, or even to pardon convicts. That the Constitution gives the President the power of executive clemency is a fact admitted by all lawyers, jurists, and scholars. And this power does not require concurrence in the administration of justice. The record of Supreme Court reversals of lower court sentences proves the point. Moreover, in recent years, executive clemency has also been used as a bargaining chip in the efforts to unify various warring factions.

Fourthly, the exercise of the power of executive clemency is left purely in the discretion of the President. Neither the Court nor Congress may limit it. In fact, there are only four constitutional limitations on the powers of executive clemency: impeachment, the pardoning power of the President after final conviction, it may not be given to those convicted by an impeachment court. Political amnesty needs the concurrence of Congress, and election offenses may be pardoned only upon the recommendation of the Commission on Elections.

Sounding Board

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

Finally, and this is the disputed part, may the President grant mass pardon or commutation?

There is nothing in the Constitution which says that executive clemency is only for individuals, on a case-by-case basis. In fact, in American jurisprudence, whereas our constitutional system denies the power to pardon already includes the power to pardon en masse, the opposite is true. The assumption about the power of executive clemency was that it included the power to pardon specified classes or communities wholesale. Thus, even without any constitutional provision on amnesty, Washington exercised it in 1795, Adams in 1800, Madison in 1815, Lincoln in 1863, Johnson in 1865, 1867 and 1868, and the first Roosevelt—to Spanish-era followers—in 1902.

It is true that our Constitution says that amnesty may only be granted with the concurrence of Congress. You have to look at the 1935 background of this provision. In its long debate on whether executive clemency should be given only after conviction, the 1934 Constitutional Convention—at the desire to be able to give clemency to political offenders even before prosecution—decided to empower amnesty for political offenders even before the filing of charges. I take this to mean that if the President wishes to grant executive clemency to other kinds of offenders en masse, the only limitations are the four found in the Constitution.

Can it be said therefore that, aside from the four constitutional limitations I mentioned above, the President is totally free to grant executive clemency to whomsoever she wishes? Well, there is, of course, that general provision which authorizes the Supreme Court "to determine whether there has been a grave abuse of discretion on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the government." Surely the Court will not find the President's mind and use that she did what she did in order to win political brownie points. Would that count as grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction?

There will be trials to pin that President down on the basis of grave abuse of discretion will have to indicate with the accepted definition of grave abuse of discretion. One Supreme Court has said on more than one occasion: "by grave abuse of discretion is meant such capricious and whimsical exercise of power as is equivalent to lack of jurisdiction. The abuse of discretion must be patent and gross as to amount to an evasion of positive duty or a virtual refusal to perform a duty enjoined by law, or to act at all in contemplation of law, as where the power is exercised in an arbitrary and despotic manner by reason of passion or hostility."

But has not the Supreme Court also said that an unconstitutional act is a grave abuse of discretion? True, but to say that mass commutation is unconstitutional is to beg the question.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has protested her "grave abuse of discretion" with approval. So have millions of others. But the President's clemency objective has not yet been completed. My hope is that she will use whatever influence she has to push her certified bill seeking the abolition of the death penalty. Or will she be satisfied to let the Senate do it? The Senate's pronouncements may have gained by her Easter pleas to mutton still be treated by a more aggressive and loud voice against the death penalty? I hope that all her energy and courage have not yet been exhausted by her ill-advised drive for constitutional overturn by initiative and referendum!

Of separation and privilege: SC on EO 464

THERE ARE TWO PROPOSITIONS THE SUPREME Court vaguely to its judgment on EO 464: first, that executive privilege is not absolute; second, that in any case it pleases several, the President can withhold information Congress requires from her or from her political agents on a bare claim of executive privilege.

The Court draws a distinction between Section 22 and Section 23 of the Constitution. The latter section empowers inquiries by the legislature in the exercise of its power of oversight. The department head may appear under orders of two circumstances: on his own initiative, with the consent of the President; or upon the request of either House. The Court cites Section 22, Congress' right to study "to grant" the appearance of department heads.

What EO 464 validly does is require department heads "requested" or "invited" under Section 22 to get the consent of the President—which, quite obviously she may withhold. Under this interpretation that may be expected as desired. Some petitioners—commentators on the constitutional convention—suggest that "request" is merely a courteous way of putting "order" or "direct." The Supreme Court applies the "ordinary meaning" rule of construction and finds it significant that in Section 22, Congress' right to study "to grant" the appearance of department heads.

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Commentary

Fr. Rambito Gallaragan Aquino

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Economy, environment's caretaker

MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES while fostering economic development is the immense thing to do. It's not a choice between ecology and economy. Unless we protect our natural resources, we cannot sustain economic growth.

Today, economics is taught in schools without any consideration of its most fundamental components – environment, the sources of nature on which all economic activities ultimately depend.

For example, economists measure the value of products coming from a farm but do not subtract the cost of topsoil erosion and toxic run-off from chemical fertilizers and insecticides, as well as the source of the farmworkers' health, according to Rob Peinbrink Kim.

Actually, ecology and economy come from the same Greek word "oikos," which means ecology or habitat and "oikonomia," which means household manager.

Therefore, the caretaker or "household manager" of our ecology is the economy. And the basis of all economic activities is the economy, supply and quality of the very elements that support life—air, water and soil. Sadly, the current economic thinking does not regard deforestation, soil degradation, air and water pollution as costs of economic activity.

Happily, all is not lost. There are many exciting things we can do to reverse the sad situation.

1. An energy transition is necessary because and then the world's vast supply of wind, biomass and other forms of solar energy which are more abundant than oil. Solar cells, wind turbines and fuel cells can power factories, homes, automobiles and aircraft. "Clean Energy Now!"

2. A shift to organic farming: a shift away from excessive consumption of chemical products and application of the precautionary principle to the chemical industry.

3. Industries populations by improving the economic and social status of women; design cities in ways that reduce dependence on automobiles; foster social, shopping and recreation; and to attract people, also, shift emphasis from cars to public transportation, cycling and walking.

4. Recycle trash to use generically modified organisms to agriculture.

5. Reduce the use of harmful chemicals in the production process. For example, glucose is better than benzene; paper can be bleached without use of chlorine or chlorine-based compounds.

7. Immediately Senate and Congress should review all environment laws and all economic policies. Mixed ecology and economy = "If you love nature, nature will love you back" work.

8. Renewing the educational system from Grade 1 to college. Make moral values the main priority and love for nature will follow. Moral decay leads to soulless.

9. Recreation: jogging, running and hiking are no match on the soul of the environment.

10. Be a change: let us lead simple lives to save nature's bounties. Let us live only what we need.

Decree that ecology and economy are now the national policy.

Decree that the Philippines is healthy and liveable.

—LEONARDO N. CARAGUE

LETTERS

Unfair characterization

WE, THE RESIDENTS OF BARRIO VILLAGE, Tierra Gloria and the Ideas Co-Compound in Tandang Sora, Quezon City, resent Neal Cruz's overly unfair characterization of our communities as freeloaders. (PDI, 4/10/06)

Our villages are small communities accordingly the Tierra Pura and 1001s Villa. Most of us here are middle-class families who, like Cruz—a resident of Mira Nila—pay city and national taxes, too.

For years, we paid the janitors from both villages just so we can get to our homes. In this not a kind of "welfare" but an ideal service, we would have driven across to a dark thoroughfare. We believe seriously should pay a toll to get home and the roads in this city ought to be public property maintained by the city for the good of all. But this is not the case, and we complied with the neither unjust interest of the city, bigger and richer communities for more than 30 years. This is not what freeloaders or vagabonds do.

We also accept the notion that we ought to contribute to a more simply not to the upkeep of the roads. This is why we agreed to the strict fees that, until this year, have been fairly reasonable. We are not, as Cruz said, reluctant to "share a small part of the burden."

The developers of nearby Village and Tierra Gloria paid a lump sum to give residents the right of way to pass through Tierra Pura and Mira Nila. If Cruz does not know this, we will be happy to show him the 1979 contract that spells this out.

Finally, we ought to distinguish between road use and security. If the homeowners of Mira Nila feel the need to augment so many security guards, then they must pay for them, just as the same way we pay for our private security arrives keeping that our neighborhoods safe for residents.

Cruz did not mention in his column that 1) the Mira Nila clubhouse was built with the help of public funds. Ads former congressmen Danny Lihan and Chuck Mathay; and 12) the main roads of the subdivision were given a new coat of asphalt again with the help of the Quezon City government.

Cruz also failed to mention that we pay Tierra Pura P300 per student, P200 of which goes to Mira Nila. Not satisfied with this rate, the homeowners' association of Mira Nila has relentlessly increased the charge to P500 more for a student which was P250 in the past. Worse, it charges to visit residents only P200 for their students, a fare Cruz conveniently did not mention. Also, he didn't mention the fact that their guards shoot down every motorcycle rider and delivery which they come through the Ideas Silo gates.

—ROGELIO E. REYES, president, Barrio Village Homeowners' Association; ROBERTO DY, president, Tierra Gloria Homeowners Association; REYNALDO VALTETA, president, Ideas Co-Compound Homeowners' Association

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Ebdane was not on a holiday trip

THIS REFERS TO THE NEWS ITEM titled, "22 officials join Ebdane in Baguio retreat; 9 abroad," (PDI, 4/12/06) which reported that Public Works Secretary Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr. was one of "the nine Cabinet secretaries who opted to spend the holiday abroad."

Actually, Secretary Ebdane was in Jakarta, Indonesia as our country's official representative to the 42nd Annual Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

—ELIZABETH PUDADERA, OIC-chief, Public Information Division,
Department of Public Works and Highways, Manila

The Office of the Press Secretary and the Presidential Management Staff also floated to the comments arising the Macleod list which named what nine secretaries were abroad, without specifying which they were. The list turned out to be erroneous after because some of the people whose names were in it, including Secretary Ebdane, turned up later in the week to join President Macapagal-Arroyo in Baguio.

—VINCENT CARREON, correspondent, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Next move: It's up to the people

THE POLITICAL CRISIS CONTINUES to worsen and doesn't look like it's about to end. In fact, many Filipinos are starting to lose hope in this country. The loss of this crisis can be traced to the growing queasiness about President Macapagal-Arroyo's legitimacy.

Instead of resolving the questions through the impeachment process, her allies made a mockery of the Constitution. They action not only demoralized millions of Filipinos who wanted to know the truth, it also created more doubts about GMA's legitimacy.

Today, GMA and her allies in the House of Representatives are working hard to revise the Constitution and transform our system of government from presidential to parliamentary. This claim that Charter change for the Philippine saving. Their true intention is to maintain the present state of affairs in power and to get rid of the former, which as present has proven itself to be a stumbling block to the administration's self-serving designs.

In fact, GMA issued EO 464, in an attempt to disable the Senate from investigating irregularities involving administration officials and GMA supporters and her military-to-come policy by narrowing their freedom of expression, she issued Proclamation 1017.

I may be critical of Arroyo, but not anymore than the silent majority. I don't see anybody in the opposition as a better alternative. Nevertheless, I encourage every Filipino, whether in the public or private sector, not to remain silent but to make known his or her sentiments.

If you don't trust GMA, put a sock or T-shirt that GMA! on your face, bonnet, elbow, trunk cushion, rope, T-shirt, cell phone or on anything visible. Then let's join our voices as one.

—LUIS E. DACUDAO, 12 SE, Hollywood Subdivision, Batasan Pt4, Tandang Sora

Businessmen, politicians support transparent Customs collector

THIS IS A REACTION TO RAMON Tulfo's "Precious gifts from BOC." (PDI, 3/30/06)

Tulfo claimed that Cebu port collector Jaime Lantoc of Mangudang, a man-purchaser, had acceleration deliveries of 7-8 persons during the period incurred by his office, and that no customs duty may it. Cebu—despite her inefficiency—has caused demoralization to the nation. Tulfo also suggested that her continued stay at the Cebu Port was made possible by a department of Finance official who had been supposedly bribed by them.

These are the facts: The Cebu Port fell short of its 2005 collection target. But the negative deviation was due to the tremendous decrease in the volume of shipments landing at the Cebu Port, coupled with a recent higher percentage increase in targets.

Despite the decrease, Mangudang, through transparency, trade liberalization and contribution consultations with all stakeholders, was able to collect P1.81B billion in 2005 compared to P1.1 billion collected by her predecessors for the same period in 2004. The target for 2006 was increased by 28 percent—very much higher than the traditional 10 percent increase the previous years.

In May 2005, Mangudang collected P600 million as the target for P900 million, for a surplus of P300 million in May alone. In June, the surplus was P124 million; it was only in July, at the height of an attempt to overthrow the Arroyo administration, that the collection suffered some setbacks.

We only saw Tulfo blame the demoralization of volume of importation on Mangudang's investors and ranchers alike react dramatically to political uncertainties.

Tulfo should see new areas to do his probing. The downfall in Customs collections was nationwide due to the drop in imports. Besides, Mangudang's deficit was only 1.7 percent, all other ports registered deficits ranging from 10 percent to 60 percent.

The only thing Mangudang carrying the force of a DOF official to drop in unique, unconfirmed is a product of a severely polluted mind's wild hallucination.

Proof of Mangudang's fear is the overwhelming support of the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Cebu Business Process Processing Association Chamber of Exporters and Manufacturers (Almacen), Philippine Cebu, Chamber of Customs Brokers Inc., Professional Customs Brokers Association of the Philippines, League of Municipal Mayors, and Cebu congressmen, all of whom have issued statements Commissioner Napoleon Morales and Finance Secretary Margarito Teves to retain her.

The port has rewarding powers under and so there can she work, but when those powers are used blatantly to serve the interest of a few, to the detriment of the entire port down to the level of no touch. Is Tulfo one of them?

—RICO S. ALEBEA, vice president, Prof'l Development, CCIA Cebu (ralebea@skylaser.net)

Travel clearance for persons below 18

THIS REFERS TO THE NEWS story titled, "Solid months award," which was published in the issue on April 22. It reported that a person aged 18 years and below no longer needs a travel clearance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development under certain circumstances.

We wish to clarify that a person who has reached his or her 18th birthday can travel alone without securing a travel clearance.

However, a person below 18 years old, traveling alone or with someone other than his or her parents, needs to secure a travel clearance from the DSWD. The travel clearance is required as a measure to prevent child trafficking.

—FELIX C. TANGER, undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Quezon City

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Across the NATION

Prime suspect claims police torture

Retracts statement implicating solon in killing of Comelec exec

By Peter Lu Jalbuena
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CAMP DIEGO SILANG, LA UNION—THE PRINCIPAL suspect in the Jan. 12 slaying of the election officer in Bauang town has retracted his statement that admitted his participation and which implicated La Union Rep. Thomas Dumpit Sr. and four others in the crime.

In a sworn affidavit he signed on April 17, Wenn Mato, the suspected killer of Bauang election registration Honorio Aquino Jr., said he was forced by policemen into signing a fabricated confession in exchange for his life and his wife's freedom.

Dear confession implicated Dumpit Sr.; his son Thomas Jr., a former police officer; the lawmaker's daughter Tess Dumpit-Michelena; SPO1 Eduardo Balisi, an aide of Dumpit; and Vice Mayor Chito Crispino of Caba town, in the same plot.

Mato said he was tortured and beaten up by policemen until he signed the confession.

Conviction

But the head of the task force that investigated Aquino's murder denied that the police tortured Mato.

"The police officers do that thing. They just concerned that," Supt. Franklin Bueno, La Union police director and head of Task Force Aquino, told the Inquirer on Sunday.

He said while in jail, he conferred a conversation between two police officers in which the says was supposed to have said that a P1-million reward would be given if Mato signed the affidavit implicating.

Bueno, in his counter-affidavit, also said Liberian Aquino, widow of the election registrar, met him at Camp Crame in the company of members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and told him to manipulate his statement saying that Dumpit's at the mastermind.

But Aquino denied Mato's statements, saying it was Mato who asked for to meet him at Camp Crame where he confessed to the killing.

"That was April 12, Holy Wednesday, when Mato told me he was the killer of my husband," she said.

Aquino, an employee of the Commission on Elections in Baguio, said Mato's confession was made in the presence of some CIDG officials and me.

Mato was one of eight people charged with the killing of Aquino before the La Union Regional Trial Court's office in Bauang.

Aquino was gunned down on Jan. 12 while he was about to board his Mitsubishi L-300 van parked near the Bauang town library building where he held office.

Mato told Commander Bautista, one of those charged in the Monday, asked him to convey to see him (Bautista) in Manila as they had a job to do.

Mato said he accepted the offer because he needed the money for his family.

He said it was only when they reached Agoo, La Union, that Bautista told him that they would kill an election officer.

Mato said he did not want to be involved in the crime as he was on parole. He said he decided to flee and return to South Catabato using the P5,000 that Bautista gave him as advance payment for the job.

With a report from Errol Alviola, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Frequent NPA raids alarm security adviser

By Dolly T. Mallari Jr.
PSI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—JUDICIAL SECURITY adviser Norberto Gonzales has expressed alarm over the escalation of raids and ambuscades by the communist New People's Army rebels on government forces.

"The report that I'm getting in my office is not showing good signs. It seems that there are more soldiers and police killed than the NPAs in the past several months," he told reporters here on Friday.

Gonzales was in Camp Nakar, headquarters of the military's fourth service Support Command (Sescom), as guest speaker to a seminar.

He said more weapons were acquired by the NPA guerrillas than by the government troops. "There are very alarming signs," he said.

Solicom chief Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay Jr. said the reports that Gonzales mentioned did not reflect the situation in Southern Luzon.

Cabuay said that in the first quarter, government forces "neutralized" 32 NPA guerrillas in Southern Luzon, with 14 killed, 17 captured and 11 surrendered.

Last year, the figure was 143, 86 and 66, respectively.

Cabuay admitted that the government suffered six dead and seven wounded in ambushes.

He said the Army recovered 57 firearms from the NPA during the same period.

The NPA was not able to seize even a single arm from the military, he said, but acknowledged that police in the region lost 14 firearms to the rebels.

"We need to measure offensives on the NPA guerrillas front," Gonzales urged.

But he also disclosed that the government was renewing its peace offer to the insurgents.

"To those who want peace, we will talk peace. To those who want war, they will face it. The government is open to a cessation of hostilities," he said.

He stressed: "A precondition of the peace talks would be the disarticulation of the NPA or at least in the beginning, a declaration of a permanent ceasefire, just like what the government is doing in Mindanao."

He said the offer for the resumption of peace talks had no deadline.

"What we want is a permanent and real ceasefire like the one we have with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front). We will continue with the peace talks provided the agenda that we want is taken seriously by the other side," he said.

Communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal dismissed Gonzales' pronouncement as "loose talk."

FORMER New People's Army rebels in Davao del Sur burn the flags of the National Democratic Front and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army to dramatize the end of their association with the rebel movement. KJLA ALCANTARA/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Suspected Red leader nabbed

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A suspected rebel leader believed to be among those involved in last year's ambush in Calinog town in Iloilo that resulted in the death of nine soldiers and the wounding of 18 others.

Samuel Lagulao, 53, was arrested on April 18 in his room at the Iloilo Mission Hospital where he has been confined since March 22 for treatment of injuries he sustained in an accident in Dumaga town in Iloilo.

Senior Supt. Isagani Cuevas, deputy regional police director, said Lagulao was arrested by members of the Western Visayas Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division based on a warrant issued by Regional Trial Court Branch 22 Judge Guillyn Grelles Lim.

He was detained at the Iloilo Rehabilitation Center in Pototan town. The court recommended no bail.

Lagulao is among the 18 suspected members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army (CPP-NPA) facing multiple charges of murder with the cases of explosive and multiple frustrated murder.

Cuevas said the 18 were among the NPA rebels who attacked government troops on March 19 in Barangay Dologan in Calinog.

The rebels detonated a land mine and fired at the troops, inflicting one of the biggest number of casualties on government forces in recent years. Among the dead were members of the elite First Scout Ranger Battalion.

Cuevas said Lagulao was deputy commander of the NPA on Panay Island in 1985.

A human rights group, Bayan (Alliance Kontra-pasis), said that Lagulao, a former political detainee, was now branch manager of the Great Domestic Insurance firm in Roxas City (see Capiz).

"It is public knowledge that he has been living and working in Roxas City for a long time now," said the group's secretary general, Samuel Tomas.

Tomas said Lagulao's arrest was "part of the government's malicious scheme" to link innocent political detainees and leaders of legal organizations to attacks by the NPA.

He urged the release of Lagulao on humanitarian grounds. Lagulao still wears a brace around the neck and could not get up from bed unassisted due to a fractured backbone.

Be visible, gov asks local execs

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S lack of good governance and failure to heed the wounds caused by warring families and a long history of political turmoil have been attributed by the provincial governor's office in one of the norms of Misamis Occidental.

Gov. Loreto Leo Ocampos, fed up by the growing insurgency in the northern town of Sapang Dalaga, issued the statement in reaction to the latest attack by the communist New People's Army (NPA) on a military detachment that killed three soldiers and wounded five others.

About 100 rebels attacked the detachment of the Army's 10th Infantry Battalion and 2nd Company of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Upper Bantawilis, Sapang Dalaga on April 15. Fighting lasted until the afternoon, with the rebels withdrawing with their arms and ammunition.

"Sapang Dalaga is a breeding ground of people with discontent brought about by the absence of good governance for so long, including that of the present administration of Mayor Virginia Bautista," Ocampos said.

To solve the problem, there should be governance "that can be seen, felt and manifested by the people, he said. Benny Macahilosog
PDI Mindanao Bureau

Roundup

Ilocos Sur vice mayor killed by son

SAN JUAN, Ilocos Sur—Vice Mayor Richard Florida was shot and killed by his son after a heated argument at their family compound in Barangay Immanuel Norte here on Friday, Chief Insp. Rene Ligutan, police district force, said at the height of the argument between Florida, 58, and his son, Gerdon, 25, the vice mayor drew his gun and fired warning shots. Reports said the three were arguing over family problems. Ligutan said that when Florida started firing his gun, Gerdon went inside their house, got a 9-mm pistol and shot his father. Police said Florida had six bullet wounds in the trunk and other parts of his body. Ligutan said Gerdon, who fled after the incident, called him up on Saturday and expressed willingness to surrender.
Leonel Abasola Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Abandoned logs seized in Masbate

LUCENA CITY—Police and personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources recovered abandoned logs worth P3 million in Masbate, Quezon on April 18. The logs measuring 1,515 cubic meters were found at Sitio Kabulihan, Barangay Bakia-Bukay. The logs were first caught in the 18,000-meter hauling base in Calumpang, Tayabas, Quezon for proper disposition.
Dolly T. Mallari / PSI Southern Luzon Bureau

4 rebels killed in Sorsogon

SORSOGON, Sorsogon—Four suspected New People's Army members were killed in an encounter with policemen and soldiers in Barangay Tagud here on April 9. Police identified one of those killed as Jaider Gutierrez, alias Ka Mikee, 24, of Barangay San Juan Chico, alleged leader of the rebel group. Two government troopers were wounded but were pronounced out of danger. The rebels set behind two grenades, a Garand rifle, a .30-cal. revolver, a mobile phone and some homemade explosives containing personal belongings. The police recovered the bodies of Tagud and nearby Barangay Pi Hagan reported finding three dead persons, one of them a woman, all with bullet wounds.
Benny B. Lobaton, PSI Southern Luzon Bureau

Icon's head, hands stolen

MANILA, (PDI)—The head and two hands of the 300-year-old image of St. Veronica were stolen on Black Saturday while three men in carnage, inside a family compound in Pulilan town, police said. Bienvenido Castro Tolentino, Rizal, May 30 not know what they are doing," said Cristina Manzano of the culprits who stole the head and hands of the image that has been with her family for decades. She said that if the culprits were other than, she would not file charges against the culprits. The Manzano family has requested the military in the Camanava police and Rizal provincial police to not prosecute any action taken, she said.
Alejandro Dalena, PDI Regional Bureau

Plan to close Banahaw permanently proposed

LUCBAN CITY—WITH THE DEADLINE TAKing place in Mt. Banahaw after tents of its caretakers have been ordered off its palapalas and mountaineers for the past two years, concerned groups are thinking of closing the mystical mountain to human intrusion forever.

"That's the general sentiment of most Mt. Banahaw stakeholders...not to lift the entry restrictions after five years and instead call for the permanent closure of the mountain for its total protection and rehabilitation," said lawyer Aris Perez, executive director of the Tanggol Kalikasan (TK), a public interest environmental legal defense center and one of Banahaw's avid protectors.

Opinion

Perez said the general opinion was reached during a "Solidarity Night" held last April 15 at the Barangay Kinabuhayan Elementary School. The program was a tribute to the more than 400 volunteers who helped manage the influx of mountain visitors during Holy Week.

Officials of Dolores town led by Mayor Rolando San Jose and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, environmentalist groups and mountain villages attended the event.

A video documentary prepared by the TK was presented. It showed the effects of packaging waste from the Kristaline Falls water to the off-limits area and motivational leaders concerning the place.

Four crafts leading to the summit are no longer recognizable due to the growth of new vegetation and the erosion of walkable.

A new camp on the summit is no longer traceable.

Dolores environment and natural resources officer Minnie Calaong said the local government was inclined to support the plan to permanently close most parts of the mountain to people.

"The permanent closure of Mt. Banahaw will be favorable to the local government. We will be able to fully protect our main water sources atop the mountain," he said.

All routes around the mountain source their potable water from Banahaw.

Closure

Since summer of 2002, the Protected Area Management Board, a multisectoral group tasked by the government with safeguarding the area, has been enforcing a five-year (5-year) closure of Mounts Banahaw and San Cristobal, where thousands of pilgrims trek during Holy Week.

Many believers climb Banahaw in the hope of experiencing something divine.

Supreme Zoe Shantidiwa, leader of religious sect Tatlong Persona Indo Dios based in Kinabuhayan Village that serves as gateway to Banahaw, has submitted to the Interim Unit he would also support the plan to permanently close the mountain.

"We're not affected by the restriction. There are still lots of sustainable sacred sites for all the religious to pray and meditate," he said said.

Calaong recalled that before the closure, at least 600,000 pilgrims and tourists annually climbed Banahaw during Holy Week.

"This year we only had around 30,000 mountain visitors. We could barely hear the dump trucks of trash collected by volunteers," he said.

Before the closure order was imposed, tons of garbage and other forms of destructive practices were left by mountaineers and devotees.

Religious pilgrims, especially sinakot and sumerak business kind of renting trees or chicken off their back, had also contributed to the destruction of the mountain ecosystem.

—Delfin Mallari Jr., PIO Southern Luzon Bureau

Tacloban offers jobs to 200 youths

TACLOBAN CITY—The city government has allocated P500,000 for a program offering summer jobs to over 200 students and out-of-school youth.

City personnel officer Cecilio Abrazo said the program, open to youth 15 to 25 years old, had started working for his office a week. Their employment will end next month.

Mayor said the program was the city government's way of helping young people avoid vices and teach them to value work.

Programs

Close to 500 youths have applied for the jobs under the Work Appreciation Program (WAP) and the Spread Program for Employed Students (SPES), but only 220 will be chosen, according to the city personnel officer.

The city government has set aside P500,000 for those who qualify for work under the WAP, or those who are out-of-school youth.

Some P500,000 has been allocated under the SPES for job-seekers whose family annual incomes are less than P50,000.

The money came from the city's general funds.

Pay

Under the WAP, the youths will work for 20 days and receive P130 daily from the city government.

Those employed under the SPES will work for 36 days and get P175 daily. 40 percent of what will be paid by the Department of Labor and Employment.

Mayor said some of the youth would be assigned to the different city offices.

Others will help in the city's cleanliness, environment and beautification programs. Jose Sarmiento, PIO Tacloban Bureau

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Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
Telephone No. 813-1361 & 221-7414 Telefax No. 813-2747
E-mail Address: bac_prov_ph@yahoo.com.ph

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), wishes to invite all qualified and reputable persons or firms to apply for Eligibility and to submit sealed bids for the following projects:

Name of Subway	Proposed Construction of Barangay Hall / Multi-Purpose Building Project Phase III Location: Lantag, Municipality of Dolores	
Location	Lantag, Municipality of Dolores	
Contract Reference Number	Barangay Hall	
Estimated Budget for the Contract	P 1,500,000.00	
Contract Duration	120 Calendar Days	

All interested bidders shall be eligible, shortlisted and invited to bid. Bidding documents, including Eligibility Documents, Instructions to Bidders, Bid Data Sheet, General Conditions of Contract, Special Conditions of Contract, Technical Specifications, and Drawings, as applicable, may be purchased from the address below upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount of P 1,500.00.

	Activity	Date / Time
1.	Publication of Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid	April 19, 2006 - May 3, 2006
2.	Issuance of Bidding Documents	May 4, 2006 8:00 A.M. only
3.	Receipt of Eligibility Documents	May 11, 2006
4.	Opening of Eligibility Documents	May 11, 2006
5.	Post-Qualification	May 11, 2006
6.	Issuance of Notice of Eligibility	May 11, 2006
7.	Receipt and Opening of Bids	May 23, 2006, 10:00 A.M.

The BAC will use the non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to those prospective bidders who are found to be eligible after the post-qualification process.

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract without incurring any liability, and to waive any defect therein to best serve the interest of the Province.

Approved:

(Sgd.) ATTY. ROMEO L. ACAÑO
Provincial Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

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ACCIDENTAL DEATH BENEFIT	P 200,000	P 500,000	P1,000,000
HOSPITALIZATION BENEFIT	P 200,000	P 500,000	P1,000,000

Amount of Premiums

AGE	PLAN 200 Monthly	PLAN 500 Monthly	PLAN 1000 Monthly
20-35	P 203.80	509.50	1,019.00
36-39	203.80	509.50	1,019.00
40-43	203.80	709.50	1,419.00
44-47	387.80	969.50	1,939.00
48-50	463.80	1,159.50	2,319.00
51-54	556.80	1,389.50	2,779.00
54-55	643.80	1,609.50	3,219.00

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INSULAR LIFE

Reinstate 383 PLDT workers, Sto. Tomas urged

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Contracting of Consulting Services for the Small Grants Programme for the Operations to Promote Tropical Forests in Southeast Asia

The Development Support Services Center (DSSC) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invites local consultants to apply for eligibility and to bid for the endorsement on: Technical Support Services for Knowledge Management Support Program of the project: "Small Grants Programme for the Operations to Promote Tropical Forests in Southeast Asia".

The "Small Grants Programme for Operations to Promote Tropical Forests" (SGP FTF) is a regional initiative fully funded by the European Commission (EC), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA). The SGP FTF works closely with and builds upon the existing mechanisms and procedures established by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Small Grants Programme (SGP/ SGF). SGP FTF will run under decentralized GEF and is currently being implemented in eight (8) countries, namely: Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Cambodia.

The project requires the services of a consultant to provide assistance in the preparation and implementation of a knowledge management support program for strengthening current initiatives on knowledge management in the eight (8) participating countries in the project.

For interested parties, Bid Documents (Eligibility Requirements, Instructions to Bidders and Terms of Reference) may be secured personally upon payment of a non-refundable amount of PHP 1,000.00 for each document from the following address:

Development Support Services Center
United Nations Development Programme
30th Floor, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza
6816 Ayala Avenue corner Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City
Tel. Nos. 632 901 8300 / 901 0211
Fax No. 632 901 8300 / 901 1177

The abovementioned Bid Documents will be released to all interested participants starting 25 April 2006 to 3 May 2006 only. The Bid Documents shall contain all instructions on the bids, procedures, criteria and other schedules for the pre-bid conference and opening of bid envelopes as well as further details on the scope of services required.

UNDP reserves the right to reject any or all the bids, waive any defect or informality therein, accept the bid and award the contract to the most advantageous offer to the UNDP, for and in behalf of the project. UNDP assumes no responsibility to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred for the preparation of bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ETHELIND B. CAPUNO
Manager, DSSC

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE employees' union at Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) has asked Labor Secretary Arturo Brion to intervene in the Supreme Court so that the 383 employees whom she excluded in her return-to-work order following a strike in December 2002.

The Manggagawa ng Komunikasyon ng Pilipinas (MKP) made the appeal after the Second Labor Relations Commission ruled back in Sto. Tomas on March 16 the motion for reconsideration that the union filed at her office on Jan. 17.

The MKP pushed for the readmission of the 383 employees, most of whom were terminated, after the Supreme Court denied on Dec. 14, 2005 the motion for reconsideration filed by the PLDT.

In its July 2005 decision, the tribunal's second division affirmed the resolution of the Court of Appeals to nullify the Sto. Tomas' order based on Art. 2, 2000.

The High Court pointed out that the phrases "all striking or locked-out employees" and "conduct all workers" in Article 263(g) of the Labor Code "do not distinguish or qualify and emphatically is a mere all-embracing enumeration of who should be returned to work."

Sto. Tomas exempted the 383 employees, who were rehired due to alleged redundancy while the strike was ongoing.

They belonged to the PLDT's operations service and mobile operations center in the cities of Malolos, Tarlac, Batangas, Calamba, Davao, Iloilo, Lucena and Metro Manila. Those offices were either closed or downsized.

The Supreme Court emphasized their situation. "Records would show that the strike occurred on Dec. 23, 2000. Article 263(g) directs that the employees must reinstate all workers under the same terms and conditions prevailing before the strike. Since the strike was held on the aforementioned date, then the condition prevailing before it, which was the condition present on Dec. 22, 2000, must be reinstituted," it said.

"Undoubtedly, on Dec. 22, 2000, [they who] were dismissed due to alleged redundancy were still employed by the petitioner and holding their respective positions. This is the status quo that must be maintained."

The NLRC said it "cannot take action" on the motion for execution and remanded the records of the case to the ZOLE.

Gemma Doble, spokesperson for the displaced workers, said Sto. Tomas should stop dilly-dallying.

"It is clear in the decision of NLRC that the only person who can decide on the reinstatement of the workers is employer is the mayor, Sto. Tomas. She was the one who prevented us from returning to work. There is no higher authority than the secretary to act on the matter, considering that she also heads the NLRC. Unless she tells us to return here on Tuesday, Thursday or Friday, PDT cannot harass them."

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE POSTAL CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Postal Corporation, through its Special Bids and Awards Committee for APHIS Project, invites all prospective bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply of computer hardware and software related to the Philatelic Information System (PIS), to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following:

Project Name	Modernization of the Philatelic Information System (PIS)
Identification Reference No.	Philatelic Information System (PIS)
Procurement Description	Supply and Delivery of Computer Hardware and Software Related to the Philatelic Information System (PIS)

Activities	Schedule	
	From	To
1. Issuance of Eligibility Requirements and Documents	April 24, 2006	2:00 P.M.
2. Deadline of Submission of Applications for Eligibility and to Bid	May 15, 2006	10:00 A.M.
3. Pre-Bid Conference	May 15, 2006	2:00 P.M.
4. Deadline for the Submission of Bid Proposals	May 22, 2006	10:00 A.M.
5. Opening of Bids	May 22, 2006	10:00 A.M.
6. Post-qualification	[illegible]	[illegible]
7. Notice of Award	[illegible]	[illegible]

Bid Documents may be secured personally upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 per set at the Office of the Special Bids and Awards Committee, 2nd Floor, Philpost Building, Makati City.

The Philpost reserves the right to reject any bid, to waive any defect or informality in any bid, and to accept the bid which it considers most advantageous to the government.

For information and details, please call:

For the Chairman:
(Sgd.)
ATTY. LUIS F. SANTOS
Chairman, Special Bids and Awards Committee
Philippine Postal Corporation
2/F Philpost Bldg., Makati City
Tel. Nos. 8161-287 / 8161-288 / 8161-289

APPROVED:
(Sgd.)
LUIS C. LUCAS, JR.
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7 NIGHTS MARVEL ITALY II

SAILING DATES	RATES	ITINERARIES
27 July 2006	from USD 1539	Rome (Civitavecchia) - La Spezia (Florence/Pisa) - Nice - Palma (Majorca) - Rome (Civitavecchia)

7 NIGHTS MARVEL AND THE AEGEAN I

SAILING DATES	RATES	ITINERARIES
23 September 2006	from USD 1539	Venice - Split - Kusadasi (Ephesus) - Athens (Piraeus) - Katakolon - Venice

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PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

BLK	LOT	AREA (sq.m.)	RATES
6-1	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-1	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-1	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-1	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-2	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-2	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-2	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-2	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-3	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-3	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-3	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-3	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-4	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-4	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-4	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-4	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-5	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-5	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-5	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-5	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-6	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-6	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-6	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-6	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-7	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-7	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-7	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-7	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-8	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-8	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-8	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-8	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-9	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-9	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-9	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-9	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-10	1	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-10	2	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-10	3	[illegible]	[illegible]
6-10	4	[illegible]	[illegible]
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Subject and properly cleared Prequalification and Proposal Envelopes may be submitted starting 27 April until 10 May 2006 and must be addressed to:

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER
PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY
Suites 1602-1603 Manila Pavilion Tower
United Nations Avenue, Ermita, Manila

1. Prequalification Documents, sealed and labeled, must contain the following legal documents:
   a) Manifest of ₱50,000,000.00 Paid-Up Capital Stock (Corporation) or Net Worth (Individual or Partnership) or Declaration of Net Worth (Individual or Partnership) duly signed by the proponent under the penalty of perjury, in accordance with the rules and forms prescribed by the Commission on Audit (COA) and duly accredited by the proponent's independent auditor;
   b) Certificate of Registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and latest General Information Sheet (GIS) (Corporation); Certificate of Registration with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (Sole Proprietorship); or Articles of Partnership duly registered with the SEC and latest GIS (Partnership);
   c) Valid and current Mayor's/Business Permit issued by the city or municipality where the principal place of business of the proponent is located;
   d) Tax Clearance per Executive Order No. 398, Series of 2005, issued by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR);
   e) Audited Financial Statements (AFS) for the last two (2) years (2004 and 2005) stamped "Received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions;
   f) Latest Income Tax Return filed manually or through the Electronic Filing System (EFS);
   g) Business Tax Returns (VAT or Percentage Tax) for the last four (4) quarters filed manually or through the EFS;
   h) Statement of all its outstanding contracts with the Government and private entities, including contracts awarded but not yet started, if any;
   i) Statement of the nature and extent of equipment, machinery, and other facilities;
   j) Statement indicating the number of key technical and administrative personnel, their experience and the projects handled under their supervision;
   k) Omnibus Sworn Statement (OSS) (Revised) executed by the duly authorized officer of the prospective bidder;
   l) Valid and current Certificate of PhilGEPS Registration (Platinum Membership);
   m) Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) computation sheet, which must be at least equal to the ABC of the project, computed as follows: NFCC = [(Current Assets minus Current Liabilities) multiplied by 15] minus the value of all outstanding or uncompleted portions of the projects under ongoing contracts, including awarded contracts yet to be started coinciding with the contract to be bid.

2. Proposal Envelopes, sealed and labeled, must contain the following:
   a) Duly signed Bid Proposal using the prescribed form;
   b) Detailed estimates, including a summary sheet indicating the unit prices and total amount of the project;
   c) Cross-sectional and plan views of the proposed reclamation area, duly signed and sealed by a licensed geodetic engineer;
   d) Construction schedule and S-curve indicating the target dates of completion of the various phases of the project;
   e) Manpower schedule;
   f) Construction methodology and sequence of activities;
   g) Construction safety and health program duly approved by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
   h) Value-added tax payable to the government.

3. Prospective bidders may be required to present proof of their eligibility and to submit such additional information and clarifications as may be deemed necessary by the Bids and Awards Committee.

4. The Philippine Reclamation Authority reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract without incurring any liability, and make due inquiries as to the qualifications of all bidders.

5. For further information, please refer to the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat at the above address and/or telephone nos. 527-5171 to 75 local nos. 222 or 223.

(Sgd.) ATTY. ALEXANDER P. BALUYUT
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

Auxiliary bishop of Cotabato named

CITABATO CITY—A local priest will become the second diocesan prelate of Cotabato in an episcopal ordination ceremony set to fill the vacant Immaculate Conception Cathedral bishop's seat. Cotabato and other religious well-wishers on Tuesday.

"Security will be tight to ensure that no untoward incident will happen," said Mayor Muslimin Sema after learning that priests, nuns, lay leaders, and members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and other guests are coming for the installation of Fr. Jose Colito Bagadiong as auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Cotabato.

Traffic will be rerouted to allow free flow of vehicles leading to the ordination ceremonies, police said.

Cotabato Archbishop and Bishops-CBCP president Orlando Quevedo said he would be assisted by incumbent CBCP head Angel Lagdameo and past CBCP president Fernando Capalla in the 9:30-a.m. ceremony.

Rizal, Jos, 30, 1956, Bagadiong entered the seminary in 1976 and earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy at the Notre Dame University here in 1978.

Theological studies

He obtained high-school and studies at the St. Francis Xavier Seminary in Davao City. He took up a doctoral degree in religious education in the mission de Dame Seminary and another major course in educational management at the Ateneo University in Quezon de Dio City.

Bagadiong's ecclesiastical elevation on April 25 will mark his 28th year of priesthood. He was ordained into the Diocesan Clergy of Cotabato on March 30, 1980, making him the second bishop in the congregation. The first was Monsignor Romulo de la Cruz, bishop of Isabela.

Regulars will serve as assistant to Quevedo in the Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, Gharbo Sultan, the Misamis Barrio

CHILDREN enjoy playing and swimming at the Dumaluan beach, Canlaon City, Negros Occ.

CAGER'S DEATH

Closure of Cagayan resort sought

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SOLANA, CAGAYAN—POLICE have recommended the temporary closure of a resort in Sanguay, Maddarulog here where a 21-year-old varsity player of the University of Santo Tomas was electrocuted on Black Saturday.

Police Senior Chief Insp. Crispin Lumbana said he had already recommended to Mayor Rodrigo de Guia the closure of Cuevo Pines and Resort after they found several defects in the establishment's electrical wiring system.

The resort, located on the hills of Maddarulog near the banks of the Cagayan River, is owned by Dr. Armando Cuevo, former provincial of the Cagayan State University and Manila Bulletin.

It is said to be a poultry farm, meat marketer and

Cuellano ordered a team of electrical engineers to look into the resort's wiring system following the death of John Lee Apil.

Apil was electrocuted after he held on to an electrically charged light post near the resort's pool at about 5 p.m. on April 15.

Witnesses' accounts said Apil rushed to the aid of Ivan de Jesus, 13, and Howell Ramos, 25, who were

He said the resort owners could be held liable for gross negligence for allegedly failing to check on the safety of the electrical installations within the resort.

The Ilocano sought Cuevo for comment on Saturday but he gave the correspondent the runaround.

Cristina Cuevo, the resort's nephew and the resort's acting supervisor, said he could tell interested parties the correspondent was not here but is based in Tuguegarao City.

But Cuevo was not to be found when this correspondent arrived. His son, Armando Jr., declined to give his mobile phone number to this correspondent.

Mayor De Asis said he also was to be reached for comment. He was on a trip to China, according to his neighbors.

On Sunday, the resort was still open, although had no customers.

Apil was the only child of Ourelie and Jose Apil.

He was a fourth year economics student at USC and was supposed to graduate in October.

His parents said Apil was looking forward to play in the Philippine Basketball League after his graduation.

Father Lee would not have died if only there was an employee who watched over the swimmers,' said Dr. Sofia de Asis, who was there with the victim's group of 14 people. The resort staff, she noted, did not know how to react in times of emergency. With a report from Zenaida de Guzman, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Respect peace zones, group asks NPA, AFP

BAWANG, QUEZON—A CHURCH-based group has called on communist rebels and government soldiers to observe "peace zones" in northern Quezon so that rehabilitation of calamity-stricken areas can continue.

Fr. Eric Montalbana, coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples' Apostolate in the Prelature of Infanta and director of the Tabid Center for Development, said the faithful cherish the peace zones as both "garden and shrine as," "sacred relief offerings" to the calamity-victims.

Montalbana lamented how rehabilitation efforts in Aga communities had been hampered by warnings fighting between the New People's Army and the Armed Forces.

Rebels had first been tipped the indigenous peoples and relief and relief workers whenever fighting erupted in the area, he said.

"The fighting has to stop and let peace prevail for the sake of the calamity-victims," Montalbana said.

The priest said the local talk had long suffered and yet calamity-affected is being their life back to normal were hounded by clashes.

In 2004, Quezon Rep. Rafael Nantes led a local executive order that declared northern Quezon a peace zone and thus, free from armed hostilities.

A halt in the fighting ensued in the early months after the peace zone was declared, but clashes have resumed, affecting mostly the Aga natives.

"We're not taking sides. Our appeal is for the two combatants to wage their battles outside the area, particularly away from the tribal communities," Montalbana said.

Aside from the Bondoc Peninsula, the Pulilla-Real, Infanta-General Nakar area in northern Quezon is considered a hotbed of communist insurgency. Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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dti

Senate ready to use power against gov't execs

If paragraph 1

senate persons, will have the authority to determine whether executive privilege is properly invoked or not," he said. "When a standoff occurs and it happens in the Senate jurisdiction, a contempt citation as a legislative power is always an option."

Section 18 of the Rules of the Senate provides that :

"The committee, by a vote of a majority of its members, may punish for contempt any witness before it who disobeys any order of the committee or refuses to be sworn or to testify or to answer a proper question by the committee or any of its members, or testifying, untruthfully, in the following manner:

"Such witness may be ordered by the committee to be detained in such place as it may designate under the custody of the sergeant-at-arms until he agrees to produce the required documents, or to be sworn or to testify, or otherwise purge himself of the contempt."

The contempt power is in line with Section 21 of the Constitution, which grants "the Senate or the House or any of its committees to conduct inquiries in aid of legislation in accordance with its duly published rules of procedure."

It is this right to hold inquiries in aid of legislation which the high court upheld in striking down parts of EO 464.

Gonzales contempt case

On Sept. 21, 2005, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales was cited for contempt for his refusal to answer questions during a Senate inquiry on the controversial P728-million government lobbying contract awarded to an American group, Venable LLP.

Gonzales was ordered detained and spent weeks at the Philippine Heart Center after he fell ill during the incarceration of the Senate blue ribbon committee chaired by Sen. Jinkee Arroyo.

Senate committees also have the power to order the arrest of officials and individuals who repeatedly ignore invitations to their hearings.

"There are no Senate rogue probes. There are only rogue executive officials refusing to answer questions to cover up for anomalies committed by rogues in Malacañang and the executive department," Lacson said in response to Bunye's tirade against the Senate.

Pangilinan denounced Malacañang for muddling the issue.

"First, it must be stressed that it was Malacañang and not the Senate that was found by the Court to have abused its power. Hence, the attempts by the President's men in painting the Senate as the bad guy is poor and simple spin," Pangilinan said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. acknowledged that there are constitutional limits to what it can do, the recourse we will use a better governed nation," he added.

Priority to pending bills

Maliksigang nonetheless said the Senate should give priority to pending legislation instead of watching inquiries, pointing out that only 10 session days remain before Congress adjourns sine die on June 3.

"Such very limited and precious time can be put to much better use by giving priority to pending bills needed and awaited by our people," said Gabriel Claudio, the President's political adviser.

Claudio cited the 2006 budget, the anti-rape bill, the ethanol bill, electoral reforms, automatization of fiscal transactions, creation of the credit information system, Countryside Bank Charter amendments and reclusions of investor tax for low-wage earners.

"For the sake of the country, these are the legislative issues behind which the executive branch will only be too happy and willing to give its full support and cooperation," he said.

GMA, Senate brace for fresh showdowns

If paragraph 1

bring to inquiries "in aid of legislation" or those in connection with the "question hour." It points out that the aim of inquiries in aid of legislation "is to elicit information that may be used for legislation," while the objective of inquiries in connection with department heads must give a response to parliamentary as a matter of duty.

Delicate balancing act

In such a case, Congress "may only require their appearance; however, "when the inquiry is which Congress requires their appearance it is 'in aid of legislation' ... the appearance is mandatory."

While the court tried to strike a delicate balance on the issue of separation powers, it made clear the point of testifying in aid of legislation, and this was enough to put the museum, who filed the lead petition for declaring EO 464 unconstitutional, in a sanguine mood.

They considered the decision a shattering blow to the executive department in its cunning battle with the Senate that has been run into a protracted political stalemate.

Flushed by the decision, Senate President Franklin Drilon has no time in inviting cohort that he would review the stalled inquiry into the allegedly anomalous P345-million Northrail project assisted by the Chinese government.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the Senate committee on national defense, was itching to issue subpoenas to military officials who were barred from appearing by EO 464, to testify on the involvement of the military in the alleged cheating in the 2004 election, as revealed by the so-called Garcillano tapes.

New showdowns

With the attention on the war path after they were emboldened by the decision, their mood for showdown now elsewhere between the Senate and the Palace.

From this perspective, the decision emerged only one issue (about EO 464) of gridlock between the Senate and the Palace.

Other issues involving challenges in the exercise of executive power and its abuses are likely to reach the court sooner than later—and these include issues associated with the "people power" campaign to oust the Government.

Still to be resolved is the issues of Proclamation No. 1017 declaring a state of national emergency in March.

Now revoked, the proclamation involves the highest constitutional issues over what has been charged as the tendency of the administration to exercise arbitrary and authoritarian powers to beat off moves to overthrow the regime through extra-constitutional means (such as coup attempts and "people power" demonstrations).

Transcendental issue

The Supreme Court emphasized that the transcendental issue raised by EO 464 was the "right of the people to information."

The decision said "EO 464 is concerned only with the demands of Congress for the appearance of executive officials in the hearings conducted by it, and not with the demands of citizens for information pursuant to their right to information on matters of public concern. ... what is involved in the present controversy is not merely the legislative power of inquiry, but the right of people to information."

There are "clear distinctions between the right of Congress to information which underlies the power of inquiry and the right of the people to information necessary to enable them to perform their constitutional duties."

People's right to know

It continued: "To the extent that investigations in aid of legislation are generally conducted in public, however, any executive issuance tending to inhibit free disclosures of information from investigations necessarily deprives the people of information which, being presumed to be in aid legislation, is presumed to be a matter of public concern ...

"The requirement of the right of the people to information as a consequence of EO 464 is, therefore, ... just as drastic as in violation of the legislative power of inquiry."

It said, "Sunset to any means ... by which officials of the executive branch could refuse to divulge information necessary in the public interest."

Otherwise, we shall not have merely nullified the power of our legislature to inquire into operations of government, but we shall have given up something of much greater value—our right as a people to know and to participate."

The Supreme Court put much emphasis on the right of the people to information, but from the point of view of formation of policy, in opinion, did not deal with the issue of the quality of information that flows from legislative inquiries.

But that issue is not a legal question. It has to be addressed in another perspective.

High gas prices spur US investments in biofuels

If paragraph 1

sugar beets a Midwestern fuel, and one of limited environmental benefit because it is made from corn, which requires considerable resources to grow and harvest.

Ethanol from willow trees

Now, New York is investing millions of dollars in research on corn-free ethanol. The State University of New York (SUNY) is spearheading that effort, which would produce ethanol using chips from willow trees instead.

"We pull out the things that are normally thrown away by a pulp and paper mill," said Neil Murphy, the president of the SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, which is also working with an innovation at Piqua plant in Scotsburgo, NY.

Essentially, the goal is to use the willow chips to make paper in Scotsburgo and then chip a syrupy byproduct to Fulton, where it can be brewed into ethanol, also known as grain alcohol.

Not that the process is ready for prime time. Most production using this approach is largely untested.

So the owners of the Fulton plant, a fledgling local company called Northeast Biofuels, hope to start by producing corn-based ethanol at the end of 2006, and plan to later experiment with ethanol from wood chips.

They formed a partnership with an established Canadian ethanol producer, Pennsylvania, and were rewarded a $3-million loan from the governor Friday on Saturday in West Sacramento promoting his support for hydrogen-powered fuel cell cars.

But Democrats said the vehicles were years away from reality and that the President needed to do more to relieve strain at the pump.

As Bush, on the second day of a four-day trip in California, toured the California Fuel Cell Partnership, a consortium of 31 car makers, energy companies and government agencies, Democrats fired off press releases from Washington attacking the administration's energy policy.

"This nation does not have to choose between a strong economy and a clean environment," Bush said in remarks at Fuel Cell Partnership, where he was flanked by two boxy-looking pro-

totype hydrogen cars. "We can have both at the same time."

Cars powered by fuel cells combine hydrogen and oxygen from the air in a chemical reaction.

Experimental Honda FCX

Bush said there were about 100 hydrogen cars on California roads, but as of late last year, only one was being tested by consumers, the Hamilton family of Redondo Beach, California, who had an experimental Honda FCX worth about $1 million.

"I strongly believe hydrogen is the fuel of the future," Bush said, adding that he thought that today's children would take their driving tests in hydrogen-powered cars.

Bush's remarks came as part of an effort to appear proactive on the politically sensitive issue of high gas prices, an issue that Democrats are increasingly using against the Republicans in the midterm election year.

Although Bush declared in his State of the Union Address that "America is addicted to oil" and then presented a series of alternative energy proposals, Democrats criticized the plan as not adequate. Bush, they say, should address consumption more aggressively and not oppose higher fuel efficiency standards for cars.

In a Democratic response to Bush, Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida said the president needed to take "more dramatic steps," including conservation and raising the mileage standard for all passenger vehicles to at least 40 miles per gallon. New York Times News Service

Ceramic reefs boost growth of El Nido's sea rainforests

If paragraph 1

the settlement of corals and other invertebrates.

They are white ceramic modules shaped like a ring laces some about the size of small coffee tables. Anchored on reef habitats, these structures attract fishes and tiny polyps, the creatures that normally create coral reefs.

Home to 197 fish species

El Nido is only the second place in the world where Seascape has installed the modules. The first was in the Bunaken National Marine Park in Indonesia.

"In the last 4000 years, the majority of the world's plant and animal endemicism have taken place in the Philippines," Seascape executive director Dennis Edwards said in a statement.

El Nido is home to 197 colorful and environmentally significant species of fish that thrive among its 100 species of corals, but Coral Fishing has drastically decimated the corals and threaten many marine life.

The theory is the marine ecosystem around the island has stunted but's local and international agencies in 78 percent of El Nido's population is dependent on the coast for food and livelihood.

Seascape through the El Nido Foundation committed 630 fourfoot modules to facilitate reef restoration on the island. The new 538 modules will be encased of this May in an area covering 1,500 square meters.

No caves

The El Nido villages are also establishing no-take zones totaling approximately 2,000 acres or allow coral reefs to grow on the artificial structures.

The World Wildlife Foundation-Philippines, which was involved in the planning, preparation and installation of the modules, is monitoring and evaluating the rehabilitation.

"The impact of the project will take about three years to realize, but the overwhelming support from all stakeholders from day one may get a successful outcome," Nicole de Cabanda, WWF head of the El Nido-Taytay Environmental Protection Project, said.

The WWF will check after a few months if the structures were still intact and if the coral transplantation had increased the fish presence in the area.

In Indonesia, where the Bunaken's were first installed, the ceramic structures attracted large populations of fish within a few months. Fishes apparently used the branching arms of the structures for shelter.

Ecobeds are designed to break and collapse when the coral corals grow stronger and take over the structure. Unlike reclaim ships or tires, which are also used to rehabilitate crippled corals, Ecobeds do not leach toxins.

Critical condition

El Nido is speckled with 45 limestone islands that host 16 species of birds, four of the seven known species of sea turtles in the world, as well as the endangered dugong.

"We are expecting tougher pain telling effects from the 6078 WSF PACE and from Bakersfield so we can effectively measure the effect of the project subclass disturbances," he in Colorado said.

About 95 percent of all coral reefs in the Philippines are in critical condition while only 5 percent are in excellent condition.

For together, the world's coral reefs cover an area only half the size of France, and they are severely damaged that 70 percent of them could be lost in the next 30 to 40 years, according to a Seascape report.

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush speaks on Advanced Transportation Technology at the California Fuel Cell Partnership in West Sacramento, California. The project is a consortium of 31 member companies who are working together to promote the commercialization of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.
AFP

GMA to visit Saudi next month for talks on oil

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO WILL visit Saudi Arabia next month for talks on oil and other economic links, a Philippine Embassy official in Riyadh said Saturday.

The visit will take place in early May and last around four days, but the exact date and details of the trip have yet to be finalized, said the official who requested anonymity.

Ms Arroyo had been due to visit the oil-rich kingdom, where nearly a million Filipinos live and work, last September, but the trip did not materialize.

Her third aide said at the time she would be inquiring whether the Philippines and other smaller economies could get "affordable" oil prices.

The embassy official said he was not aware if the President would seek any special oil deals, as a time crude prices have reached record highs of more than $70 a barrel.

But he said Riyadh was a major oil supplier to Manila and the talks would deal with "overall economic relations," including oil and investment opportunities, as well as issues related to Philippine expatriates in the Gulf country.

Ms Arroyo is expected to appeal for clemency for six Filipinos facing the death penalty on murder charges in Saudi Arabia, the official said.

They include Ruy Corvo, a welder in a car repair shop who was sentenced to death in May 2005 for killing a Pakistani taxi driver. Last June, Manila asked Saudi Arabia for mercy in the case.

Convicts on death row can ask for appeal if their victim's family accepts payment of compensation known as "blood money."

In a separate case, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Friday that seven Filipino workers detained in Saudi Arabia had confessed to murdering their missing compatriot in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

Saudi officials are trying to determine whether human body parts found in plastic bin liners south of Jeddah on April 4 belonged to the missing Filipinos, Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said.

The seven suspects were among 52 Filipinos rounded up after the body parts were discovered. Manila is seeking the release of the 45 others detained Filipinos, Conejos said. AFP

Reimpose oil price controls, gov't urged

From page A1

In a joint statement, the two lawmakers said it was high time Congress stepped in "and prevented oil companies from exploiting the volatile situation to jack up their profits."

More price increases

Oil firms again increased pump prices by 50 centavos a liter on Saturday, part of the series of upward price increases because world oil prices are still going up, according to Pacensolla.

"Energy Undersecretary Petes always already warned that in about four to six weeks there would be a steady increase in oil prices, which could be almost $80 a barrel," said Pacensolla, chair of the House committee on transportation and vice chair of the committee on energy.

In the explanatory note, HB 5005 harped on the failure of RA 8479 since its implementation in 1998 to dismantle the oil cartel of the Big Three — Philippine Shell, Petron and Caltex Philippines.

The bill seeks the scrapping of the oil deregulation law and the industrialization of the industry because the law "only worsened the problems in the oil industry and further victimized Filipino consumers," Serhero said.

Under RA 8479, the government adopted a policy of liberalizing and deregulating the downstream oil industry "in order to ensure a truly competitive market under a regime of fair prices, adequate and continuous supply of environmentally clean and high-quality petroleum products."

To this end, the state shall promote and encourage the entry of new participants in the downstream oil industry, and introduce adequate measures to ensure the attainment of these goals, the law said.

Under a liberalized setup, oil companies may freely import or purchase any quantity of crude oil and petroleum products from a foreign or domestic source, lease or own and operate refineries and other downstream oil facilities and market such crude oil and petroleum products.

Alternative fuels

Pacensolla and Javier sought a ceasefire on political bickering, saying the rising oil prices should move Congress into passing measures pertaining to the development of alternative fuels.

"It would be the height of immaturity if lawmakers do not pay attention to our urgent concerns because of their obsession with partisan inquiries. The times call for unified efforts against the rising prices of fuel, which affect all our daily lives," Pacensolla said.

Pacensolla and Javier appealed to Congress, particularly the largely anti-Arroyo Senate, to buckle down to work and focus on legislation that would solve the country's urgent problems like the spiraling oil prices and increasing unemployment rate.

One measure is the Biofuels Act authored by Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, which was passed by the House and submitted for Senate debates in the Senate.

The bill proposes to replace within four years a tenth of the national gasoline consumption with ethanol.

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RP envoy to Mexico Justo Orros dies; 72

By Volt Contreras

PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO Mexico Justo O. Orros Jr. died Saturday at St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City. He was 72.

Orros died of pancreatic cancer, according to Gilbert Asuncion, spokesperson of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The former three-term governor of La Union from 1992 to 2001 was appointed to the foreign service post in March 2002. He was a member of Ateneo de Manila Law School Class of '58 and pursued further law studies in Madrid, Spain.

Prosecuted Binghong

He was the Quezon City Fiscal who prosecuted and won the case against Vicente "Binghong" Crisologo for burning several barangays in Ifugao Sept. decades ago. He also served as a regional trial court judge and later as a provincial board member of La Union and mayor of San Fernando City.

The late diplomat was married to Josefyn Abengan. They had three sons.

Governor's grandson

He was a member of the Ortega clan, being a grandson of Joaquin Ortega, the first governor of La Union.

His remains are at the Christ The King church in Green meadows, Quezon City. They will be transferred to San Fernando City La Union, on Tuesday where burial plans have yet to be announced, Asuncion said.

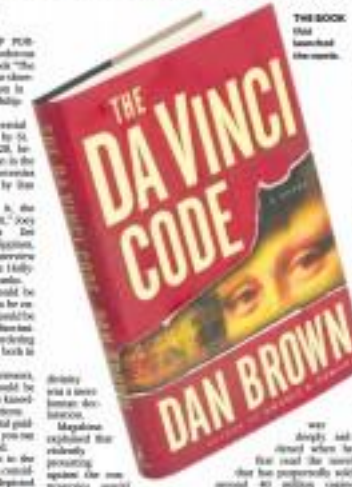
A gentleman

Consul General in Mexico Ed de Vega, who worked with Orros for almost a year, remembered him as "a gentleman who valued the historical connections between Mexico and the Philippines."

The Spanish-speaking Orros was also "very elegant, good looking and had great rapport with the Filipino community" abroad, De Vega said.

Group maligned in 'Da Vinci' book set to welcome movie

By Christian V. Esguerra



THE BOOK: Did launched the movie.

THE CATHOLIC GROUP PURtrayed as a scheming, murderous cult in the best-selling book "The Da Vinci Code" is all for the showing of the film adaptation in predominantly Catholic Philippines.

Opus Dei, the controversial group founded in Spain by St. Josemaría Escrivá in 1928, believes it's the better option in the wake of even more controversies generated by the novel by Dan Brown.

"The more you hide it, the more people will look for it," Joey Magalona, an Opus Dei spokesperson in the Philippines, said the business is an innovative Saturday, referring to the Hollywood film starring Tom Hanks.

But while viewers should be left with their freedom to be enthralled," he said they should be more discerning, if not discriminating, on information bordering between fact and fiction, both in the novel and movie.

Magalona hoped that viewers, especially the youngsters, would be guided, say, by their more knowledgeable parents, if not priests.

"There should be parental guidance so what doubts arise, you can fix them right away," he said.

The Opus Dei member in the movie was "extremely calm considering the way the novel depicted the movement—a cult that murders to protect a central deception is the 2,000-year-old faith that Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene and that Christ's divinity was a mere human deception.

Magalona explained that evidently, promoting against the core tenets could go against the spirit of Opus Dei [Work of God in Latin] which promotes the sanctification of one's work and a deeply religious life.

He admitted, though, that he was deeply saddened when he first read the novel that has purportedly sold around 40 million copies worldwide.

"I felt sure sad for Jesus Christ," he said. "He was treated very unfairly. The Church's tragedy is very rich and here you have one guy alleging that what we have believed for the last 2,000 years is all lies."

But Magalona was convinced that Jesus, the savior of humanity according to the Christian faith, allowed controversies like those contained in the "The Da Vinci Code" to come on for a higher good.

For one, he said, Catholics' renewed keener examination of their faith, seeking answers ever to questions like Christ's divinity that should have been addressed convincingly in basic religious classes.

The burning issue on basically provoked Church leaders on an intensive endeavor to go even more evangelical nowadays.

For another, the controversy allowed all misunderstood groups like Opus Dei to better respond to questions, even suspicions, Magalona said.

"Maybe this is the right time to let people know who we really are," he said. "I feel the controversy helped in a way because members are more open to talking about Opus Dei with nonmembers."

In the past, Opus Dei, a world-wide membership of around 84,000 priests and lay people, was forced to hide under a cloak of secrecy partly because of allegations ranging from it being a monastic group to a right-wing organization placing the Vatican at its mercy.

There are around 3,000 members in the Philippines spread out in 60 Opus Dei centers in Metro Manila, Laguna, Batangas, Cebu, Bohol and Bacolod.

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RP overseas schools urged to promote Pinoy identity

By Alcuin Papa

PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS OVERSEAS MUST continue promoting the Filipino identity, Department of Education officer in charge Fe Hidalgo said in a speech she delivered last week before officials of Philippine schools in Xiamen, China.

"As Filipino educators overseas, you all know the importance of promoting Filipino identity. But... you must [also] recognize the need to teach Filipino children abroad that they, too, are part of that Filipino identity, not just because they belong to our race, but because they, too, contribute to the richness of our race. They are integral to our national pride and our national identity. The efforts we made to make Philippine schools overseas possible are all about our children and what we teach them," Hidalgo told her audience of administrators and educators.

She asked overseas school officials to maintain both quality and access to overseas schools. She also suggested that educators maintain a high degree of quality and professionalism in the management of their schools.

"I am sure that you are very much aware of the important role you play in the Philippine education system and in the lives of the young Filipino boys and girls you serve. But while you continue to provide affordable quality education based on the Philippine curriculum, while you contribute in shaping the Filipino identity of the overseas Filipino children and youth you serve, and while you endeavor to ensure that the standards overseas are enable students to be readily integrated into the Philippine educational system upon their return to our country, you must also ensure that your schools are managed well," she said.

Hidalgo also suggested that school managers "find ways of making your schools run productively and smoothly. Provide the leadership necessary to ensure quality performance in all aspects of school management."

She said the hiring and selection guidelines for school managers and teachers must be tailored to the same standards as the host country "to ensure that the management of your schools—and the management of your classrooms...are at their optimal levels. Also, provide opportunities for the professional development of your principals and teachers."

So Filipino overseas students would have a smoother transition to local schools, Hidalgo said the teaching and testing methods must conform to local standards "so we can find out how well our overseas Filipino students perform, and find out how well they are adjust to studying in Philippine educational institutions."

She also suggested that overseas schools build links to local schools to keep in touch with standards being used in the country.

Hidalgo also pushed for the adoption and eventual institutionalization of the DepEd's flagship program called Schools First Initiative (SFI). The program seeks to bring in other education stakeholders into projects meant to develop and support schools in the community.

A plus METRO

Celso Emer G. Dipasupil

CHARGE! Policemen from the five districts in the metropolis displayed their crowd management skills during the civil disturbance management competition held yesterday at the RizalPark. The Manila Police District topped the event. (See story on Page A16). NOEL ALTOVAR

MMDA waves 'Pink Cloth' on Wednesday

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE "PINK CLOTH" CAMPAIGN, THE NEWEST TRAFFIC SCHEME of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, will make its "debut" on Wednesday in Cubao, one of the most traffic-prone areas in the metropolis.

"We will first launch it in Cubao because that's the best place for us to launch. It's the most practical area for us because that's where we have loading platforms (for buses)," MMDA Traffic Operations Center executive director Angelito Bengco in Oro said yesterday.

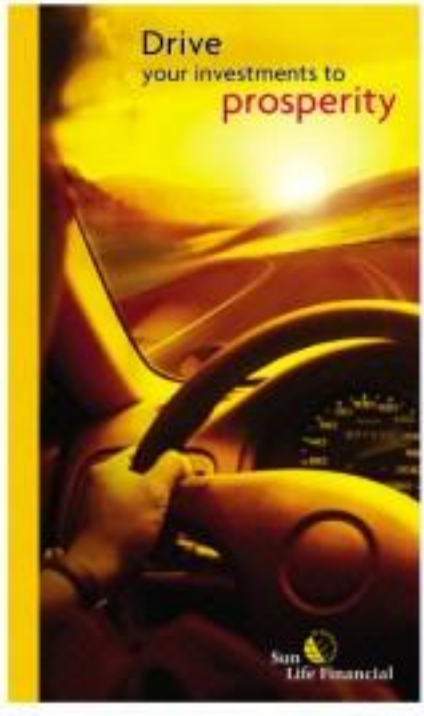
Beginning Wednesday, traffic enforcers of the MMDA holding pink flags attached to light aluminum poles will be stationed on the northbound side of Aurora in Cubao, Quezon City. The agency said it already has 10 pink flags, with 20 more expected to be delivered today, in time for the scheme's implementation.

The campaign, a brainchild of MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando, is aimed at preventing buses from stopping too long at loading points to load passengers. Traffic enforcers will use the pink flag to block the doors of overstaying buses.

The dark will bear the messages: "Overstaying ng isang bus sa sto. Sa sumusod na bus ay isang aabalahin", ITSA bus has stayed too long. Please take the next bus."

Fernando came up with the "Pink Cloth" scheme as he observed that the measures being used by traffic enforcers to install discipline in bus drivers lining up at passenger stops were ineffective, after Cebu, the MMDA plans to implement the campaign in North Avenue, upon request and the Magallanes Interchange in Makati City.

Times have definitely changed, but only for Labor Day.



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Manila police best Metro antiriot force

By Margaux C. Ortiz

TOWN PRESIDENT PACE-OFFS with protesters, especially those trying to set foot on the Chino Roces (formerly Mendiola) bridge for the past months, have finally paid off.

For the first time in four years, members of the Manila Police District topped the National Capital Region Police Office's civil disturbance management (CDM) competition held at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, Manila yesterday morning.

Representatives from the Southern Police District's CDM unit, last year's champion, were a close second, according to NCRPO Police Director Vidal Querol.

"The MPD unit's combination of tactics and timely employment of reinforcement made them the competition," Querol said in an interview.

He added that the members of the MPD CDM unit used the "wedge formation" in dealing with the unruly crowd, who were played by policemen dressed as the NCRPO.

Querol added that the members of the MPD unit were also credited for the completeness of their uniforms and equipment, "especially their newly painted shields."

Although it was a close competition between MPD and MPD, the defending champion placed second because they were a bit careless in protecting their neck," the NCRPO director said, explaining that many of the MPD unit members were "surprised" and "startled" by mock pressures.

Querol said the Southern Police District's unit placed third in the competition.

Daily practices worth it

Senior Supt. Danilo Abarrosa, chief of the MPD Operations Division, said their unit's daily practices since April 3 "had been worth it."

"We were able to prove our values from the CDM formation and problem solving aspect of the competition," he added.

Abarrosa said the MPD CDM unit faced different challenges yesterday, such as lengthy negotiations with group leaders and civilian protesters.

"When the protesters began hitting and pelting stones at the policemen, our CDM team used water dispersal in controlling the crowd and arrested the violent ones," he said.

The MPD official said their unit, composed of 120 personnel, were led by Chief Insp. Edgar Alarilla.

"Our achievements only shows that we are prepared to face any rally or private demonstration," Abarrosa said.

No psychological war ploy

He also denied that the Philippine National Police had used the competition as a "psychological war ploy" before the May 1 Labor Day protests, as alleged by militant leaders.

"The competition is held every year so there is no reason for us to use it as a psychological war tool," the MPD official said.

Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes had said that militant groups were planning a big protest rally on May 1, in commemoration of Labor Day and to demand the immediate ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Reyes and hundreds of other protesters were based down by the police when they succeeded in reclaiming Chino Roces bridge for a few minutes earlier this month.

MPD officials had banned militants from setting foot in the area because of its proximity to Malacañang Palace.

CHILDREN Ruben Licsansky as a volunteer tells about a story in a mall in the metropolis, hours Sibayan, one of Alitaptap's pioneers.

Volunteer storytellers want to revive kids' interest in reading

By Jobe M. Aurelio

"SO TODAY'S GENERATION OF children is raised on digital media, video games, MTV and the Internet, reading might seem like a boring way to pass the time.

This has prompted a group of volunteers to take on the challenge of initiating children to the delights of reading — by storytelling action and humor into the stories they tell.

Formed in 1999, the Alitaptap Storytellers Philippines was started when Ricky "Alitaptap" Sibayan lights in the dark ignited the enchantment which storytellers weave into the stories they tell," said Manolo "Nolo" Sibayan, one of the group's pioneers.

Sheer chance

A son of Mr. Sibayan, the late veteran actor, Sibayan said he got involved in the group by sheer chance. A training and development consultant, he was on his way to work when an ad in the paper caught his eye. It called for volunteers for a children's storytelling session at the library branch. Sibayan said he promptly volunteered and despite his initial misgivings, went on to become one of the group's members.

On the other hand, public-utility vehicles will be removed to minor streets. Government emergency vehicles and construction vehicles, however, are not banned from the 15 streets, city officials said. Violators will be apprehended.

Manilans has long been pressuring the use of bicycles as a healthy and cheaper alternative to cars, especially amid the rising prices of gasoline. The city government has even constructed over 30 kilometers of bike lanes, the only local government unit to embark on an integrated bikeways system.

An internal disorganization, however, caused a spin on Alitaptap's activities a year later. When the faction led by Ompie Bodjie Pascua left the group, Sibayan saw it as a chance to come up with the style that would later define Alitaptap's approach to storytelling.

He explained that at the time of the split, the group was having difficulty defining what approach to use.

"Some storytellers were so animated, they ended up embedding the kids with their antics," Sibayan said. In addition, they would relish some parts of the story so much it more interesting.

Book-based approach

Sibayan, however, said he preferred the book-based storytelling approach in which the storyteller "intentionally and unintentionally lifts his story from a book he reads" with the use of his voice, body language, the environment and even the audience.

"You don't just read the book, you read a story aloud. You read it first, then you narrate it to your audience using your voice and body," he added.

Sibayan, however, wants to take it a step further... by sounds, big literature into bouncing up and less-taxing, entertaining lessons of children's books.

"I tell librarians during workshops, 'Kayo'y librarian! You should be fun and more party fun! Librarians should not be stereotyped as dusty, stinky people. In fact, I think the venue for storytelling sessions should be the library because it's where the books are," Sibayan said.

New home

Last year, Alitaptap moved to its new home in the National Library along Tm. Kalaw in Manila, where it has been conducting its storytelling sessions.

Despite the dropping number of volunteers each year, Alitaptap president Charlie Chua is optimistic. "I don't think we're losing in manpower. What we need are people's outstanding skills."

For Sibayan, he finds fulfillment not in performing, but in inspiring teachers, librarians, and children to perform for others.

Thus, on the other hand, Sibayan believes he will be most whenever she sees children, laughing along or hanging on to her every word and action whenever she tells a story.

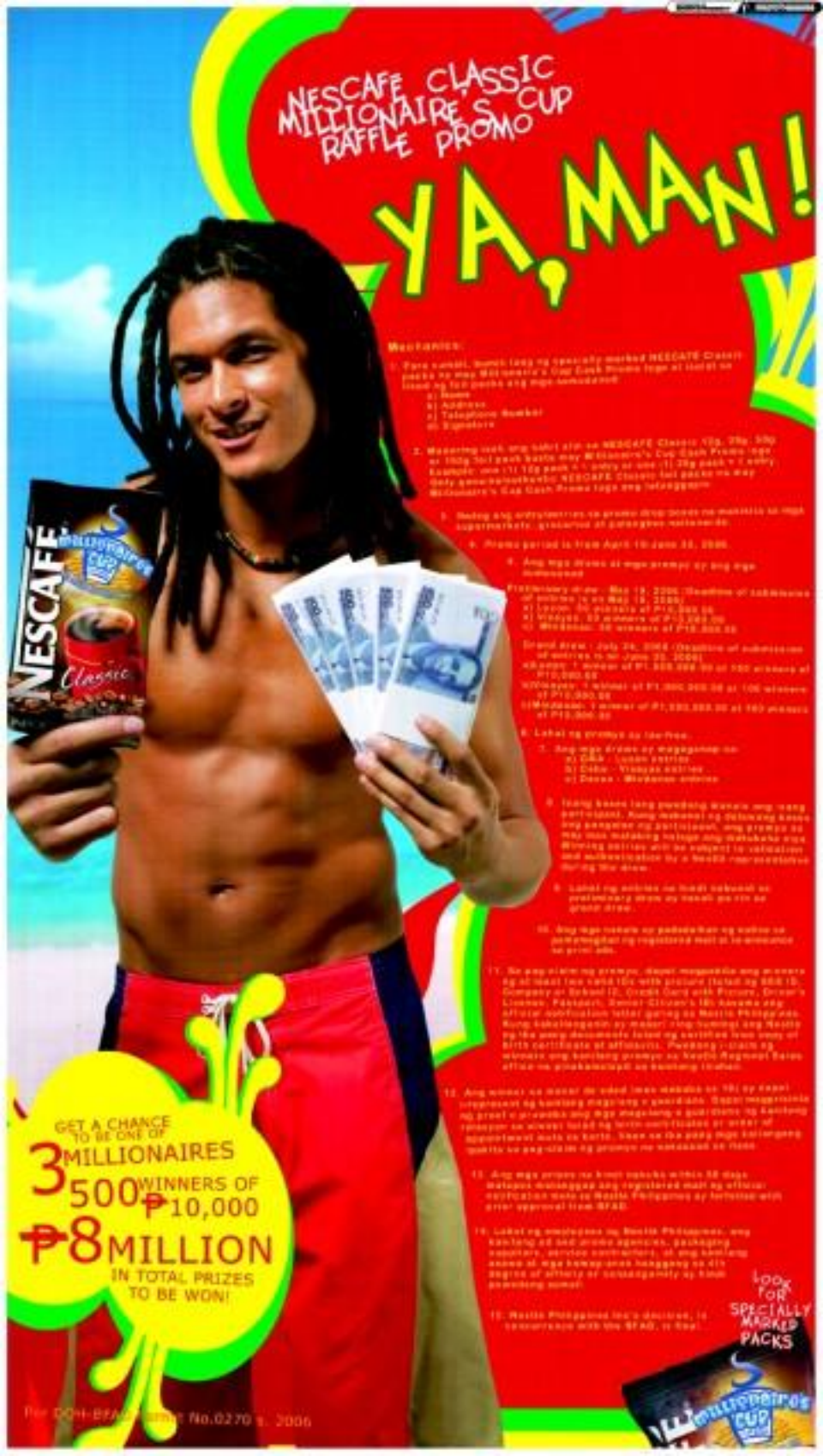
Hopefully, the spark started by Alitaptap will live on into a full-blown career for budding storytellers, instead of flickering out.

Marikina closes 13 streets today

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DRIVING TO THE MARIKINA City hall or the City Public Market today?

Avoid these 13 streets in the city: Sumulong Highway (from JP Rizal to Gil Fernando Street); Shoe Avenue (from Sumulong Highway to Gen. Gomez Street); M. Dela Rosa Street (from Gen. Gomez to the City Hall); Nicanor Reyes Street (from JP Rizal to Shoe Avenue); Jacinto Street (from Sumulong Highway to M. Dela Rosa); J. Dela Paz Street (from JP Rizal to Shoe Avenue); Gen. Ordoñez Street (from Gen. Gomez to Gen. Ordoñez Avenue); Gen. Ordoñez Avenue (from City Hall to Sumulong Highway); Jacinto Street (from Shoe Avenue to M. Dela Rosa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Mabuhay kayong lahat!

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,
President, Republic of the Philippines

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You, our youths are the hope and strength of our country. Hasten your values and continue to strive hard and be of service to God and to our fellowmen. Be always inspired to keep the candle burning.

As the famous line of John F. Kennedy says, "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." So, take the lead to be the catalyst for change. Do your best to love, serve and protect our only Philippines.

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Joy Marie P. Gidacos, Baga Central School 2, Bogo • **Mhe Paul Batanay**, Carmen Central School, Carmen.

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Julie's BAKESHOP

Iran says it won't plug oil flow despite nuke row

TEHRAN, (PNS) — Iran said on Sunday that it would not disrupt its oil exports as a weapon in its nuclear dispute with the West.

Fears that Tehran, the world's fourth biggest oil exporter, could cut back its crude oil exports or disrupt energy shipments from the Gulf have helped drive oil prices to record highs above $75 a barrel in recent days.

Tension between Iran and the West escalated sharply this month after Tehran said it had produced its first batch of enriched uranium and was forging ahead with plans for industrial-scale output, despite UN demands that it halt all enrichment work.

Western nations, who are threatening to press for UN sanctions, accuse Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons and insist their ship embargoes, which has military and civilian uses. Iran says it only wants to produce electricity.

Some Iranian officials have in the past suggested Tehran may use oil as a weapon in the dispute.

But Oil Minister Kazem Vaziri said on Saturday Iran's oil supplies would not be disrupted.

"We strongly believe there is no reason for sanctions. But in any case, we will not cut our oil exports," the minister told listeners on the sidelines of an energy forum in Doha.

The United Nations Security Council may consider sanctions against Tehran after studying a report due on April 28 from the International Atomic Agency (IAEA) on whether Iran is meeting its demands for a halt to uranium enrichment.

"During the eight-year war we imposed on us by Iraq we never stopped exporting," the minister said in reference to the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq conflict.

He also quashed speculation that Iran could redirect exports to customers that were sympathetic to its cause, Iran shipments of two cents is the first time while the majority of supplies in Europe goes to France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey.

"We will continue to meet our obligations to all of our customers," Vaziri said.

In Moscow, a senior Iranian diplomat played down a radio report that Tehran had a "long agreement" with Moscow to convert uranium in Russia and hold no new dead had been made. Reuters

Japan, S. Korea reach accord over islets row

TOKYO—JAPAN BOASTS a wealth of relief on Sunday after South Korea and Japan struck an unusual morning a standoff over an ocean survey sent a chain of disputed talks.

"It was the most realistic compromise at that stage," Asahi Shimbun said in its editorial. "Both dropped their claims and reached a peaceful compromise."

"We praise the efforts made by the two sides to avert the crisis," the influential newspaper said.

Tension had mounted since Japan pushed last week for a survey of the ocean bed around the disputed islands, called Dokdo in South Korea and Takeshima in Japan, in the Sea of Japan (East Sea).

Tokyo said it needed to conduct the study to submit a counter-proposal to an international oceanographic meeting in June, which was in response South's proposal to set formal names for features on the seabed.

But the two countries delayed the latest row after South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and his Japanese counterpart Shotaro Yachi held three hurdles talks in Seoul.

Under the settlement, South Korea agreed to delay its push for the meeting proposal while Japan suspended the study.

"The agreement resulted from the efforts of the both sides, which handled the issue calmly under international law," Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said later Saturday.

"We want to make efforts to build a forward-looking friendship with South Korea," Abe added.

Hidenao Nakagawa, a senior lawmaker of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), called for continued efforts to ease the tension, saying: "We are chasing the same target."

But the conservative Sankei Shimbun daily warned that a territorial row can easily emerge again if Seoul makes a similar proposal next year. AFP

CORAL AT RISK

Rising sea temperatures could signal a repeat of the widespread coral death that swept the Caribbean in 2005. About 40 percent of coral died around parts of the US Virgin Islands last year, and the coral that survived likely isn't healthy enough to survive another hot summer, says the US Geological Survey.

Prodi faces break in his coalition

ROME—JUST THREE DAYS after his election victory was confirmed, Italy's prime minister-in-waiting Romano Prodi faced a rupture in his coalition and an ally predicted the fall of his government.

The prediction, by Nino Sandro, leader of Democrats of the Left (DS), came as Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's supporters continued to demand vote recounts even after a Supreme Court ruling on Wednesday confirmed Prodi's under-duty victory.

Parisini's gloomy forecast sprang from a feuds for the prestigious positions of Lower House speaker between Bertinotti party and the Communist Refounders (co-led by Fausto Bertinotti).

Members of the DS were left moaning when their candidate Massimo D'Alema pulled out of the race on Friday to avoid a coalition collapse after Bertinotti, who toppled Prodi's 1998 government, threatened to quit if he did not get the job.

"We have already spent other two days, that this is how it will finish," said Parisini, whose party gained the largest number of votes in the April 9-10 election, the closest in post-war Italian history.

"It is possible that I cannot trust (Prodi) any more?" he added in an interview with la Repubblica newspaper.

Prodi, who spent the day at his family home, in the northern city of Bologna, denied there were rumblings of discontent.

"Everything is going to be fine, everything is going to be fine," his aide reporter after returning from a cycle ride.

He calm was not shared by Italian newspapers that unanimously said he could ill afford bickering with the smallest majority in Italian history and with Berlusconi, who has refused to concede defeat, plotting street opposition. Reuters

Generals' revolt expands Rumsfeld debate to young officers

WASHINGTON—THE RISING ire of retired generals who publicly criticized Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has opened an extraordinary debate among younger officers, in military academies, in the armed services and colleges and even in congressional posts and some bases in Iraq.

Junior and midlevel officers are discussing whether the war plans for Iraq reflected unwarranted military advice, whether the retired generals should have spoken out, whether active-duty generals will feel free to state their views in private sessions with the civilian leaders and, most directly of all, whether Rumsfeld should resign.

In recent weeks, military correspondents of The New York Times discussed these issues with dozens of younger officers and with active-duty officers in the field, as well as in informal conversations at the Pentagon and in e-mail exchanges and telephone calls.

To protect their careers, the officers were granted anonymity so they could speak frankly about the debates they have had and have heard. The interviews that emerged are startling but within it, although all were relieved by deep concern over the quality of civil-military relations, and the way ahead in Iraq.

The discussions often flare with anger, particularly among many midlevel officers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and face the prospect of additional tours of duty.

"This is about the moral bankruptcy of general officers who lived through the Vietnam era yet refused to advise our civilian leadership properly," said one Army major in the Special Forces who has served two combat tours. "I can only hope that my generation does better someday."

One Army colonel enrolled in a defense department university said an informal poll among his classmates indicated that about 25 percent believed that Rumsfeld should resign, and 75 percent believed that he should remain. But of the second group, two-thirds thought he should acknowledge errors that were made and "show that he is not the intolerant and inflexible person some paint him to be," the colonel said.

A field grade officer now serving in Iraq said he thought it was incorrect for the retired generals to call for Rumsfeld's resignation. The problem, he said, is that "if there is a policy issue to be cast, it rests as much upon the shoulders of our senior military leaders."

That officer, like several others interviewed, emphasized that while these issues often occupied officers' minds, the debates had not instilled the military's ability to function in Iraq. "We expect here that I can see regarding this subject," he said. NYT

Iraqi leaders end deadlock, name Maliki PM

BAGHDAD — TOUGH TALKING Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr was tasked to form a coalition government by Iraqi leaders on Saturday ending a four-month political deadlock that many feared could push the country into a civil war.

"We are going to form a family that will not be based on sectarian backgrounds," Maliki told reporters, seeking to stand a bipartisan Shiite image and promised himself as a prime minister able to unite Shiites, Kurdistan, Sunnis and Kurds.

But in his first policy speech, Maliki called for Iraq's powerful militias to be merged with US-trained security forces — an explosive issue for Shiite Muslims, fearful Sunni and Kurds.

Maliki should be in the hands of the government. There is a time that calls for the merging of militias with the armed forces," said Maliki, nominated by the ruling Shiite Alliance, the largest bloc in parliament after December elections.

The United States, which had blamed the last months of political paralysis for fueling violence, hopes a national unity government will foster stability in Iraq and enable it to start bringing home its more than 130,000 troops.

Five US soldiers killed

"This is a good day for Iraq. It is an important day for Iraq," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a conference call with reporters in Washington. "This is someone with whom we can work."

Five US soldiers were killed on Saturday in two separate roadside bomb attacks south of Baghdad, the US military said.

More than 2,300 US soldiers have been killed in Iraq since the March 2003 US-led invasion to topple Saddam Hussein.

Maliki, who has 30 days to present his Cabinet to parliament, will have to tackle an insurgency that draws support from the minority Sunni community and resumed bloodshed that has exploded since a February bombing of a Shiite shrine.

Sunnis hold many under Saddam's rule but the majority Shiites are now the kingpins in politics.

Maliki's rise also was at odds with Iraq's economy, which has been starved of foreign investment because of the violence.

The Shiite Alliance chose Maliki — an official in Iraq's oldest Islamic party — after its original candidate, interim Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, bowed out. Other parties opposed Jaafari on grounds he was too weak.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani formally designated Maliki as prime minister after a break through in negotiations on Friday and asked him to form Iraq's first full-term government since Saddam was ousted in 2003.

Jaafari, parliament nominated Talabani as president.

Talabani, a Kurd, is the first ceremonial president of an Arab country.

Sunni Mahdi Mehmud al-Mashhadani was elected as parliamentary speaker. A former student officer in Saddam's army, he was jailed for joining underground Islamic groups.

Test for Maliki

US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, a driving force in pressing Iraqi politicians to end their differences, urged Maliki to discuss strong and competent ministers in every Iraq.

Appointing officials overseeing powerful ministries, including the interior, defense and oil portfolios, will test Maliki's ability as a deal-maker.

Sunni leaders have accused the Shiite-run Interior Ministry of condoning death squads targeting Sunnis as it there has been a protected battle over that portfolio. Shiites deny the charge.

Maliki, who spent years in exile in Iran and Syria, has pressed for the execution of Sunni insurgents who have killed Iraqis and a group of former ministers of Saddam's Baath party from power, more.

He had been widely viewed as a sectarian politician, but Sunni leaders say they can live with him.

The backing of the Sunni leaders is vital because of the support insurgents draw from the militant community. Reuters

PALMS: Formidable Nuku should...

LIS LANKAN walks at seeing the remains of her nephew killed by gunmen days after Tamil rebels pulled out of peace talks.

Sri Lankans, hit by war, tsunami, flee new violence

By Peter Apps

BATTICOLA, SRI LANKA—CHELLAMAL SOSAmichamal fled her home twice and lost her husband and two children in Sri Lanka's two decades civil war.

Then, the 2004 tsunami devastated her refugee camp and she moved once again.

Now, the 60-year-old woman is again heading back into the jungles of northeast Sri Lanka, fleeing new violence that is deserving relatives and needs relief. Hundreds and thousands are mobilizations the island's 2002 ceasefire.

"Where else to go?" she asked through in her native Tamil language, tears running down her cheeks. "I've left my home three times in a row. What is the point of living here?"

Fund members are now hard to come by and charge daily, but aid workers and officials say several thousand people have fled their homes after suspected Tamil Tiger rebel attacks were followed by ethnic clashes.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), whose two-decade fight for a Tamil homeland has killed some 64,000 people on both sides, deny recent attacks on troops. But it is almost impossible to find anyone who believes them.

Eyewitness the site of the attacks in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, Muslims and the majority Sinhalese on the side by side, they have only refused up ethnic tensions.

Diplomats say they have almost given up hope that talks in Switzerland between the Tigers and government, since scheduled for late next week and now postponed indefinitely, will ever take place. The peace process seems completely deadlocked, they say.

In Chenkalady village, Batticaloa, on the eastern of the northeastern port town of Trincomalee, the turning point was when 26-year-old Palayanan Baskaran disappeared on 9th day.

The military denies involvement in the incident, but local Tamil residents say they heard screams coming from a nearby army camp. The next day the teenager was found on the road, shot in the head and covered in blood.

"We don't like the LTTE attacking the soldiers," said Mythreder resident H. Sabaratnam because outside the Batticaloa family home, a corrugated iron and mud shelter that has been their home since the civil war.

"We don't like people dying. But like driven people to the LTTE. There is no one else supporting the Tamils."

Batticaloa's mother smiled over the body of the son's remains, while neighbors packed their belongings to leave.

The small by village of Sainampoor is already empty.

Residents fled after a fortnight-long bomb barrage between the LTTE attacks near Trincomalee, where just already some 400 people, aid workers say.

Food, water and other aid supplies are getting through, some diverted from the post-tsunami effort after violence cost sharply two weeks ago. More than 100 people sleep in a room intended than a tennis court, but no one seems to leave. Reuters

WHY THE TIDE HAS TURNED

In every village, town and province, the Filipino people have raised a collective voice that rings across the land with an unmistakable demand: it is time to amend the Constitution; it is time to change the structure of government and shift to a parliamentary system and a one-house Parliament. It is time to put an end to gridlock, fighting between senators and congressmen and between the Senate and Malacañang, which only a unicameral parliamentary system could cure; it is time to do away with coup attempts and destabilization, and dirty, destructive and poisonous politics.

Support for the People's Initiative to amend the Charter has jumped from 20 percent six months ago to 43 percent in recent weeks. **Sigaw ng Bayan** continues to gather the signatures of millions more of Filipinos who seek constitutional reform as the last hope of the nation.

Influential business organizations, major labor and civil society groups, and all the leagues of local officials nationwide have joined in this chorus for change!

Business backs initiative

MANILA STANDARD TODAY, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2006

The **Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (PCCI), headed by Donald Dee, and the **Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry**, led by Francis Chua—both with a combined membership of 10 million workers and employees nationwide.

TUCP: Cha-cha will reinvigorate economy

THE PHILIPPINE STAR, SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2006

The **Trade Union Congress of the Philippines** (TUCP) with one million members—the largest, most respected labor union in the country, led by Democrito Mendoza.

Charter reform will trigger an inflow of foreign investments, which our country needs to build thousands of factories and millions of jobs—says **TUCP**'s Alexander Aguilar

Labor leader urges Charter reforms to create more jobs

MANILA BULLETIN, SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2006

Protestant churches join people's initiative

MANILA BULLETIN, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2006

The **Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches** (PCEC) with 2 million adult members and 20,000 churches, headed by Bishop Efraim Tendero and Bishop Federico Magbanua.

"We see the people's initiative as a valid expression of the people," says Bishop Tendero, who feels Charter reform is highly relevant today.

SIGNATURE DRIVE FOR CHA-CHA

Ulap joins initiative petition

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2006

The **Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines** (ULAP), with 1.6 million members and local government officials, headed by Gov. Exico Aumentado, composed of the following: **League of Provinces** (78 provinces), headed by Gov. Aumentado; **League of Cities** (115 cities), headed by City Mayor Jerry Treñas; **League of Municipalities** (1,500 towns), headed by Mayor Ramon Guico; **League of Board Members**; **League of Vice Mayors**; **League of Councilors** and **League of Barangay Councils** with their 1.7 million barangay officials, tanod, barangay health workers, councilmen, and lupong pampayapa.

✔ Ang Sigaw ng Bayan: Yes! to People's Initiative

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo R. Gomez

Osama calls for prolonged war in Sudan

DUBAI—AL-QAEDA LEADER OSAMA BIN LADEN called on Muslim fighters to go to Sudan to wage war against "crusader thieves," according to a new audiotape attributed to him that aired on Sunday.

Bin Laden also slammed the Darfur conflict and the international isolation of the Hamas-led Palestinian government as proof of a "war by crusaders and Zionists against Islam" in the tape broadcast by Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television.

It was the first purported recording by the Western world's most wanted man in three months but its authenticity could not be verified and it was not clear when it was made.

In the last audiotape attributed to Bin Laden in January, he threatened new attacks against the United States but also offered the American people a condition of "truce."

That tape marked the first time Bin Laden had been heard from in more than a year but there was still no information about the whereabouts of the man behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and a host of other terror strikes.

In Sunday's tape, he called upon Muslim fighters to prepare for a prolonged war in Darfur, in his first reference to the conflict in Sudan that hasn't before he fled to the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in the late 1990s.

"I call upon the mujahedeen, Daily translator) and their supporters in Sudan and its surroundings...including the double-Peninsula—to prepare to lead a prolonged war against the crusader robbers in western Sudan," he said.

About 300,000 people have been killed and more than two million forced from their homes in Darfur since 2003 in fighting between rebels and militias backed by government forces. The crisis is one of the continent's worst humanitarian tragedies.

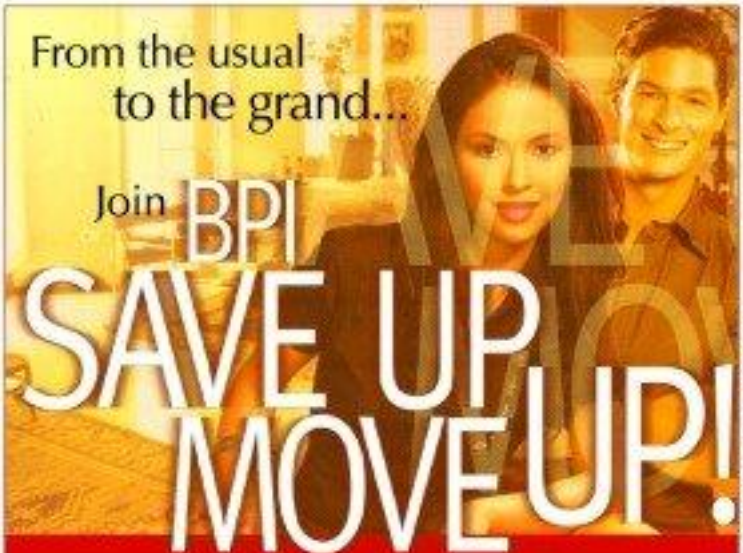
"Our aim is clear, which is to defend Islam, as well as its land and people, and not to defend the governments of Khartoum, even if we share common interests," bin Laden added, in reference to the Islamist government that has been in power since a 1989 coup.

The African Union is currently engaged in a diplomatic effort to bring peace to Darfur and has deployed a 7,000-strong force there. But the mission has been plagued by financial problems.

Bin Laden also criticized the Western isolation of Hamas since it took power in the Palestinian territories last month, leading to a cut in vital aid from donors such as the United States and the European Union.

"Their rejection of Hamas after it had won the election... contributed to the proof that it is a war by Zionists and crusaders against Muslims," he said.

Bin Laden also urged Muslims to boycott products of Western countries, including the United States, which backed Denmark following the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad, Al-Jazeera said. AFP



PROCESSIONAL? protesters lie injured after riot policemen have charged them, with a mile from the royal Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu, Nepal, April 23. ■

Groups provide advice, support to US illegals

WHEN MELLESEN TIMER, A TAXI DRIVER from Ethiopia, thought his employer was cheating him several years ago, he did not complain to the police. He went instead to a workers' center called Tenants and Workers United.

The center helped Timer and other drivers in Alexandria, Va., win the right to keep more of their fares. Not only that, it has helped child-care workers win a 75 percent raise and city laborers who back pay for minimum-wage violations.

Tenants and Workers United is one of a fast-growing number of centers that are helping the nation's 10 million immigrant workers. In many ways, these centers are doing what labor unions, fraternal organizations and settlement houses did decades ago for newcomers to the United States.

"We are all from different countries, and our English is broken and nobody understands us," said Timer, who has driven a taxi for eight years. "But these workers center was selling us hope. They provide us experience. They provide us a lawyer. They support us."

There are more than 140 worker centers nationwide, up from roughly 25 a decade ago. The centers played a pivotal role in getting tens of thousands of workers to the streets in demonstrations seeking a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and preventing a House bill that would turn illegal immigrants into felons.

Many illegal immigrants—day laborers, gardeners, laundry workers, restaurant dishwashers—have relied these centers for help on wage problems because the nation's legal services offices are barred from representing them. Moreover, the centers often fill the role once held by labor unions, which represent less than 8 percent of low-wage workers.

The centers teach immigrants English and how to file wage complaints. They have persuaded construction to build shelters for day laborers, who often stand in the rain and cold without bathroom facilities. They have helped push for higher minimum wages in several states, and some centers have won more than $1 million in back pay for immigrants who were cheated.

Mish Erikstad, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a group that supports stricter immigration controls, voiced ambivalence about these centers.

"The bad part is their groups become lobbies for illegal aliens," Erikstad said. "On the other hand, they help people stifled out of their wages. That can serve a function by nature is nature, the price of hiring illegal aliens, and the more it costs to hire illegal aliens, the more employers might turn to legal workers." NYT

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendrez

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Beermen notch 7th straight win

By June Navarro

SAN MIGUEL'S DANNY SEIGLE seems to find Talk 'N Text an easy assignment.

Seigle, the Texas Matador-ffin Philippine Cup's leading scorer, poured in 16 of his 27 points in the deciding period last night and led the Beermen to a 100-95 upset over the Phone Pals at the Araneta Coliseum.

The 6-foot-7 scoring machine, who also specialized in Gilas's first recruit romp over the Phone Pals, anchored the decisive run that eventually the Beermen's impressive victory evening to seven games.

Dorian Pena had another double-double

SEE PAGE 4

Junior World q'fying

AFTER A TWO-DAY break, the qualifying tournament for the Callaway Junior World Champs continue tomorrow at the Clubhouse links and fifteen executive sessions tomorrow with exciting finishes expected in the high-en division.

Mark Melon tries to present a four-stroke lead over Mico Yee in Boys' Class A by leads at Sherwood Hills while in the overall title, Rambee Ann Ho is just a shot ahead of reigning Philippine Ladies Open champ Jenny Jacinto de Villa and Crystal Dagondon.

A total of 168 youngsters are playing in the 108-qualifier to the Junior World Championship July in San Diego, California.

The other sponsors of the tourney include the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Titleist, Nikmos, La Salle, Taylor Made-Adidas, Ping, Asia Magic, Srixon, MSI-CI Air Liquid, Inspirex Golf and Michael Gee.

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FORD RANGER
4x4 Pick-up w/ 2.5L Duratec

Sparks climb out of 23-point hole

GAMES TOMORROW (San Andres Gym, Malate)
2 p.m. — National Centers vs. Magnolia Ice Cream
4 p.m. — Mirinda/Pasteurized vs. Red-A Shoes

By Francis Ortiz

THERE SEEMS TO BE NO HOLE the Toyota Otis Sparks cannot climb out of.

Faced with a 23-point deficit, the Sparks leaned on the heroics of Noy Baldoz to squeeze out a thrilling 82-80 victory over Sanlu back Ildefindo to grab sole second at the start of the second round of the 2006 PBL Unity Cup at the Ultimate Sports Center.

Nineteen sprawled on the Sparks' gutsy comeback that saw Toyota register its biggest comeback-fueled win en route to its sixth victory in eight starts.

But it wasn't the only comeback Toyota has fashioned out so far.

In the first round, the Sparks also crawled out of a 20-point hole to pip Mirinda/Pasteurized.

In the latest show of never-say-die spirit, Baldoz helped seal the victory with a pinpoint assist to Joe Devance, who converted the game-winning basket in the final seven seconds.

In the second game, Granny Goose hammered Engine PCL (46-30) to sharpen to 4-1.

With 38 Quibuyen imposing his will inside the paint, the Steelmasters own the Steelmasters to a 3-1 clinic.

Devance represented for the Sparks with 27 points on 12-of-19 shooting from the field and chipped in nine boards and two assists. Rookie teamed up with 10 points.

Jose Ildal product Marco Alquitz also contributed a sure four-point play that jump-started the Sparks' blistering third quarter rally.

The scores:

First Game

TOYOTA (82-80) — Devance 27, Quinto 10, Jondan 8, Garcia 7, Alquitz 7, Abbott 6, Zhao 4, Alon 4, Lanong 2, Arimad 2, Rodriguez 2, Cruz 2, Catubing 2

SANLU (64-80) — Lang 19, Lanuza 14, Sison 12, Mercado 8, Canon 7, Tang 5, Magbanua 4, Valentino 2, Dandi 2, Estacio 0, Gonzalez 0

Quarters: 13-30, 28-42, 48-62, 82-80

Second Game

GRANNY GOOSE (46— Lanuza 16, Gonzalez 12, Sison 12, Legada 6, Sabido 4, Abad 3, Cruz 3, Dela Pena 2, Santos 2, Perez 1, Canales 0, Diaz 0

ENGINE PCL (30— Soler 10, Santos 5, Belga 5, Moreno 5, Sanz 3, Gervacio 2, Espinosa 2, Rivera 2, Gonzalez 2, Reyes 2, Guevarra 0, Cardeo 0, Salazar 0, Sandi 0

Quarters: 17-9, 27-17, 40-22, 46-30

BIG MAN Mark Andaya (right) of Toyota Otis challenges Kelly Williams of Magnolia in this file photo. The Sparks nipped Talanoa yesterday in another come-from-behind performance.

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M. Lhuillier overwhelms West Negros Mustangs

THE M. LHUILLIER KWARTA PADALA-CEBU City Jewelers dug deep to overachieve to expose the gritty Talisay City-West Negros College Mustangs, 90-81, and keep their undefeated record intact in the MI. Kwarta Padala Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference on Saturday night at the Cebu Coliseum.

The Jewelers of businessman-sportsman Michel Lhuillier and head coach Raul "Boyet" Alcantara struggled most of the way but caught fire towards the end, holding the visiting Mustangs to only four points in the final seven minutes to firm up their hold of the lead with a crucial 5-0 dash.

Unlike in their previous loss to the MLGH-Manicani Traders, the visiting Mustangs were in fighting mood this time as they overhauled an 11-point deficit late in the first canto and even led on several occasions including at 68-67 at halftime.

West Negros had its last taste of the lead at 73-72 with 1:20 left in the third period as Alano Cigunday hit two free throws. But Nelito Bandoro wound up an acrobatic layup to give the Jewelers (6-1) a edge entering the fourth period.

The Mustangs last threatened at 77-80 before Jayfred Rodriguez, Prentice Enriquez and Stephen Padilla presided over a game-closing 13-4 assault by Mr. Lhuillier.

Rodriguez finished with 18 points and four other Jewelers scored in double figures to collect a 10-game performance by Manning Ely Christo, who matched his league record.

The league is backed by ML Kwarta Padala, including Shipping Lines, Motives, Navarro's Igating Drinking Water, Panasonic, and Galpo-on Liners.

The scores:

M. LHUILLIER (90— Rodriguez 18, Enriquez 15, Padilla 14, Llanto 10, Ayog 10, Cigunday 8, Ramirez 8, Tangcuang 4, Miguel 3, Mangin 0, Estibello 0

WEST NEGROS (81— Christo 23, Vergara 17, Tuan 10, Cigunday 8, Gaabo 5, Tamonte 4, Cagas 2, Gubaluang 2

Quarters: 21-16, 41-48, 59-52, 90-81

Del Rosario rules Petron jet ski tilt

SUBIC BAY—MOBILE JET SKI SUPERCAP Paul del Rosario proved he's still the best Filipino in the sport when he bagged three titles yesterday at the start of the 2006 Petron Jet Ski Nationals held at the Subic Freeport Beach here.

Del Rosario first displayed exuberance and grit as he ruled the four-lap Stand-Up Ski class over Navarre teammate Carlo Garcia and perennial rival, 1997 National Champion Julio Diez.

Then he repeated over Garcia and newcomer Jil Pineda in the Open Sport class of the event.

He capped his outstanding feat by topping the premiere Super Open 1300 class, pulling ahead early in the eight-lap race to prevail over Diez and former meet champion Ej Ong.

Ang focused his energy in winning the Super 1000 Open event for Aces-sponsored rivals Dave Torres and third placer Darley David.

The kickoff leg sanctioned by the Jet Sports Association of the Philippines (JSAP) president Oong Arcilla and Race Director Ronnie Yulong drew a huge crowd yesterday.

Topping the other classes were Dia Figueroa, Regine King and Mhel Margin. Figueroa, one of the eight first timers in the event partnered by Petron and sponsored by SBMA, Harsawa Jetsports, Gerry's Grill, Courtyard Inn, Pioneers Realty Mix, Amy Realty Rite, Aces Car Restoration Service, Subic Marina, Printing Images, Metro Lubrabest Total Service Facility, Hill Crest Products, Cop dirac, Cypress Stairs, Wild Mist Adventure Rentals and Ulises Laboratories.

The next round is slated May 13. Active jet ski riders and water enthusiasts intending to compete in the national series can call tig Mirawis Atopotca at tel. no. 413-5100 or may log on at www.seriesjetsports.com.

DEL ROSARIO goes airborne in show-off skill.

Boxer Paderna swims to world-class stardom (Or what GMA missed at Baywalk on Friday)

BARE EYE

Ricardo Fernández

SUMMING UP SOMETHING sounds like a month-worthy thankful, but most.

Jun Paderna defended his Far East Boxing Association super featherweight title. He won four of seven rounds.

It was a forgettable period that should inevitably be listed the most hilarious in Philippine boxing.

The Games and Amusements Board table would be seated on two national convention hall around a seminar on rules and regulations, an awards night and a strike fight card hosted on Friday by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza at the Rizal Memorial Park, all the new world-famous Baywalk.

The main event featured the flatbrush Paderna super clash for the FARA super feather-weight crown held by the Cebu-based slugger.

The fight was supposed to showcase a fine brand of Pinoy boxing, in the tradition of Manny Pacquiao, Brian Viloria and Rosie Rosie Ramos.

Paderna won by a mile in the cards of three international judges, including the vastly traveled Adrian Lagumbay of the host country.

Trailing for a knockout, the flat-footed Paderna stalked his handsome foe with the burning eyes of a cougar that hadn't devoured a rabbit for over a month.

He slammed, dashed, swung blindly for 12 rounds.

Paderna fought very hungry, thirsting for blood.

However, his winning effort was so wild it should have sent Paderna all the way in the shores of Cavite City had he instead jumped into the Manila Bay across the street, a few steps from the boxing ring.

Of course, the boxing rope to the international boxing convention had not seen anything of the sort before.

Paderna, a tarsier, has just crowned himself the newest phenomenon to Philippine sports.

Here's one wonder boy that has retained an international boxing crown via a burning, wannabe display of saving-ring skills inside the ring.

Nationally, Paderna got his belt, a green girdle-set wrapped around his waist to the reluctant applause of displeased spectators.

But before it's too late, we hereby recommend the winner and still champ for a separate award.

He should be handed the distinction as the dominating wonder of world boxing.

I told it. The proposal should first be reviewed for approval by the main boss, GAB chair Eric Buhain.

In one quote Jun have for gusto, Buhain, son-in-law of favorite Secretary Eduardo Ermita, was himself a rational swimming boy's two decades back and 30 pounds ago.

The Paderna win, indeed, was a new high for 30 swimming.

Perhaps, appearing quite fit filled in administrative boxers out, should be congratulated.

There were other reasons to rejoice.

The card itself, said to have cost P4 in million, was not an out-and-out steal.

The defenders, starring concert queen Pops Fernandez, classy songstress Jennifer Hendricks, together with pretty singer Yeasmi Abdh, was fine chow.

The hotel refs, headed by fair shatraa and Hortie Tarselia, were first-rate.

The judges were sharp, despite doing their chores for a song.

Oh, the Thai. He did not prove any better than a struggling cook.

But despite clashing in only the most build of an underdoer, he survived 12 rounds of soggy, watery bombardment, for handsome handicapped.

We heard it. It was a classy, manly event, so advised the Solar Sports commentators of the design effort.

Thank you, sirs.

Thank you again, Sir Eric.

On the way to the finish by the Bay, redesigner of the rehearsal for the forthcoming WBC convention there, we discovered a new swimming hero.

Nothing could be more, truly world-class.

2nd Pasig non-master chess tournament up

CHESS INSIDE CHESS EVENTS Company will be staging the second the biggest chess tournament in Pasig on Saturday, April 29, at the Atrium 2 of Eve Gateway Dollgas Complex.

The second Pasig Non-Master chess tournament is open to unrated players—all ages and sexes—beginners, unrated, and rated players with ratings not over 1050. The format will be a seven-round Swiss with 25 minutes time control.

The regular registration fee is P150.

A cash prize of P15,000 awaits the top players. For more information contact Gloria Pineda at 904 4938, Mark 0917-6586220, or Benedict 0922-2789493.

Visit the website at http://bbs.pot5.com/chess-works for more information.

REGIONAL TRIAL COURT

ORDER

PHILRACOM H-RACING

Real Spicy rips rivals

By Hussong B. Castillo

REAL SPICY PREVAILED OVER Speed Advantage in a race decided in the final strides yesterday to project the first Philracom Pinoy H-Racing Cup at the Santa Ana Park and stamp his claim as the best local in the land.

The handsome chestnut horse came upwards a final burst of speed under Jessie Guce to down Real Game gamboy Louie Balbas Jr. in 1:46 by three-quarters of a length over the Fernando Raquel-owned Speed Advantage.

The winning time was one minute and 50 seconds for the 1,450-meter race.

Australian-bred import Golden Idol fared badly in his first race out against the best, failing to contain a breakneck pace under Jessie B. Hernandez to finish dead last more than lengths behind.

It was the fifth straight win for the Ramon Dizon-owned Real Spicy, and the blistering time was just a full second shy of the meet's track record he set a couple of months back at a regular race.

"He is just in great shape," said Balbas, who piloted the progeny of Real Quiet out of Spicy Tale in place of Jesse B. Guce, a Filipino, "It's as if the races were that he did not want to lose."

Real Spicy was sent off as the slight pick after collecting P430,825 out of the total pool of P1,018,434, and the 4-year-old, who won the Triple Crown's third leg last year, looked like he's done when the field tackled the home after Golden Idol threw him aside and opened the door for Speed Advantage's rush.

But Balbas persevered, applying the whip regularly on Real Spicy who responded with his second wind to win P219,000 for Sagucio and add another handsome couple to his growing collection of major stakes victories.

More importantly, the victory proved how well Sagucio's team is preparing Real Spicy for the Saggies' next shoot, particularly the PCSO Pera Circuitwinner-Silvers Cup, the semifinal stakes pinching for all local horses.

Real Spicy, who battled for quarter clockings of 23.2s-24s-25s, moved fourth behind the speed-built Golden Idol, Kingdom Battle and Speed Advantage.

Speed's advantage, who won the Presidential Gold Cup last year, actually ran a smart race with Raquel-favoring jockey Jessie overtaking the lead early and getting him to talk to the rail.

Real Spicy and Speed Advantage could meet again in a major race as the San Lazaro Leisure Park is looking at the Manila Jockey Club's Derby duel-extended showdown in the Silver Cup on May 14.

Siblings of top Aussie colt now in the country

THE SIBLINGS OF FRANKLIN IN Australia last Easter Sunday produced all-time high results with a sale by Rainbow's Choice out of Deja Vine bringing a princely A$1 million ($0.4 million or P22 million) — a single sale record Down Under.

The Australian bloodline is very much present in horse horseracing, with Deja Vine progenies number-one hog highly in the Philippines, some of them in wood and the others still with relatives in tracks.

Her sensation Redoute's Choice won the Cup of that million-dollar auction and the sale of that colt capped a total of 14 yearlings sold for more than A$1 million (P19,000) each and a total of 28 youngsters going for an average of A$57,821,000 ($19,3 bn).

South African trainer Charles Laird made the historic purchase representing south-billionaire Marcus Jooste, and the sale will undoubtedly change the landscape of stud and horseracing in the world.

Redoute's Choice sire stud fee was around A$44,000. After that ground-breaking purchase of Laird, the services of the stallion jumped by hundred%. That has been jacked up to A$110,000.

Former Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office chairman Jr. Fernando Raquel Jr., who breeds horses in Australia, is the first owner of Deja Vine.

"Son of Deja Vine's famous offspring in the country, who can hold siblings of the record-setting colt, are Pedi Master and Real Sleep, both retired to stud and standing in two of the most excellent stud farms in the Philippines.

Hillcrest Gallop Alabio "Pedi" Pinol owns the stallion Bull Master, who is by Pedi Master out of Sagucio's Breeze Native in Lipa City has Real Sleep.

Real Sleep was retired to stud by Sagucio last year and is a maiden breadwinner.

Bull Master is the size of two of the most promising daughters in days—Triple Crown Sugar King's Dominion Gun of Hacienda Shaw) and Hillary Cruz of Petron Magazine) which is owned and bred by Sagucio's.

"This only goes to show that the owners are rewarding the right path towards upgrading the pedigree of racehorses in the Philippines," Sagucio's, also the owner of former super Sugar Prince Bull Master, told the Inquirer. Hussong B. Castillo

PHC CARDOMA (left) drives against Cebu Cologists

Beermen notch 7th straight win

From page B23

with 22 points and 14 rebounds, Dondon Hontiveros scattered 19 points, and Jeffrey Hubalde, who had a pair of telling put-backs, finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds as the Beermen improved to 9-2 overall.

"It was Danny's day, but we always have a collective effort every game," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico. "The key I guess, was the way the players did their job defensively."

The Brewmen flowed Talk N Text 102-100 after avoid a deficit down from the final 42 seconds with stellar fetigle, Delos and Hontiveros did damage on the other end and eventually drank the Phone Pals their first loss in four games.

Talk N Text dropped back to 5-4 despite getting 29 points from Vic Pablo.

"We just can not sneak at the right time," said Uichico. "They have good first and second units so we have to adjust to their rotations."

As Tenters scored 17 points and grabbed 11 rebounds and Harvey Carey had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Phone Pals.

In the second game, Alaska snapped a three-game slide with a 107-88 victory over Coca-Cola.

The victorious topped their record to 4-7 while the Tigers, who have lost back to back games, dropped to 5-4.

The scores:

SAN MIGUEL 102— Reyes 2-7 (Asi) 0; Hontiveros 10 Hubalde 11, Rosales 5, Cengcon 0, Cortez 0, Antonio 0, Ildefonso 0, Dela Cruz 0, Ibanes 0, Ibanes 0, Ibanes

Cudia, Macaspac rule JVC reg'l tilt

JACKSON CUDIA OF DAM UMIG outpunched teammate Ruthlee Ruiatan, 21-9, 21-13, while Stanley Macaspac survived Rafael Sandoy, 21-19, 21-14, to register respective dominance in the elite event of the JVC Regional Badminton Championships at the Emil Bedminton Center in San Fernando, Pampanga over the weekend.

The veteran netter Cudia and Macaspac PLAMH gold-medal playoff score each with the duo upstaging battle at the upcoming JVC Spex Badminton Championships slated in July at the Glorietta.

Lisa Encarnacion, meanwhile, outlasted Golden Shuttle Foundation teammate Rhenia Yapangco, 21-16, 21-10, to bag the girls' crown in the junior division spearhead by JVC PHILIPPINES Inc. Petal Vie-ws of Mighty Bubble took the boys' plum with a 21-6, 21-11 rout of 2 Brothers Pepe Bread EC Benavides.

Meanwhile, Davao will host the third regional leg on May 1-3 at the Pilipark 'N Mart Badminton Club with Standard slapping the third leg on May 21-28 at the Pabayo Badminton Center. Deadline for registration of entries is on April 28 (Davao) and May 11 (Bacolod).

Over at SM Megamall, Gerald Ellegion disposed of last year's 10 under champion Joe Gangcuben in a thrilling three-setter to grab individual berth in the boys' 12 under division.

Mikaeel, playing out of Wet Ruthlee Elem. School, backed a fine set setback to complete a two-peat 21-23, 21-14, 21-14 victory.

Others who advanced in the event backed by Victor Sackets, Bingo Bonanza, Sunkern, Clown Inc, Hartford, I-Time Studio, Lactoyol, Kooks , Pinoy Jackfruits, Pinoy Jolly, Jacol, Empathmark, The Stall, Sunkist and Body Project were Michael Ilois, Tristan Goyos, Bernardus Alsberg and Lance Bautista.

OPENING SERVE: Davao and officials of the V League presented by Shakey's do the ceremonial serve officially opening the second conference at the Roman Blue Eagle Dom on Saturday. They are (from left) league commissioner Reep Bay Lee, marketing director Joel Bascarra Tanak Tseng (Mikasa distributor in the Philippines), MVP Shakey's consultant Leopoldo "Chino" Prieto III, Philippine Volleyball Federation Rivera officer Ricky Palou and ABC-5 sports programming manager Winston de la Cruz.

World Cup national elims under way today

A TRIP TO CARACAS, VENEZUELA AND A chance to compete in the world's most prestigious individual bowling tournament will be up for grabs as the 2006 Bowling World Cup eliminations unfold in 33 centers today.

Open rounds and female Filipino bowlers 36 years old and above, the tournament will kick off simultaneously in the following centers.

Pasay's Diamond Bowl, Pinpin Sports Center, Hongis Superbowl Greenhill, Q Plaza, Xybor Bowl, Superbowl, Bowling Inn, Pearl Plaza, Pasig's Tenementor Bowl, Pasig's Midtown Bowl, SM West, SM Megamall, SM Fairview, Coronado Lanes (formerly Starlanes), Aztechnic (formerly Metropolis Alabang), Commonwealth, Grand Central, Hongis Pinoylanes Bowl Inna, Power Bowl, Grand Lanes, Pinoy Sports Bagtas, Monumall Lanes and Pasig's Skybowl.

The first qualifying period, three months will be held until April 26, while the second qualifying stage will start on June 25. The five-month finals will be conducted on June 15-25, while the second center finals will be held Sept. 14-24.

The center finals will determine the 64 participants – 42 men and 42 women – in the national finals starting on Sept. 25.

The format will be the same as last year's national competition. The finalists will be crowned as 36 men and women after the finals at Greenhills Lanes on Sept. 25 and 26, and further cut to eight men and eight women after the second day on Sept. 26.

The remaining contenders will then figure in head-to-head matches in the best of three quarterfinals, semifinals and finals on Sept. 28.

The last day of the national finals will be held at SM Megamall.

The national men's and women's champions will earn the right to play in the 2006 Qubica AMF Bowling World Cup international finals slated on Nov. 4-10 in Ontario, Manitoba.

Centennial tops President's Cup Regatta

By Jasmine W. Reyes

SUBIC—SPONSORED BY A WELL-TRAINED national sailing team, the Centennial of the Philippines captured the overall championship in the 14th President's Cup Regatta on Saturday at the Subic Bay Inter.

Jacko Schwab's Sydney 40, Centennial, skippered by Jamie Pelmer, topped three of the six inshore races to finish with seven points in the nine-day international tournament.

"I have 14 members in my crew, 10 are from the Philippine sailing team," said Schwab after his nine-year-old boat climbed to fifth berth amid 120 in the IRC sailing class. "We're quite happy because our boat's been competing, we've been there in the past two years.

Jo de Bus, owned by George Hackett of the United States, dominated the IRC Cruiser Racer class, while Centesa, owned by Michelle Alexsyrel Bunag, ruled the PY Cruising class.

Ray Ordonez's Rainbow made it a 1-2 finish for the Philippines in the IRC Racing class. Not ready making Centennial the Race 51 Rainbow garnered two first-place finishes for an eight-point lead.

Jolly, owned by Frank Pang of Hong Kong, was a distant third with 16.5 points.

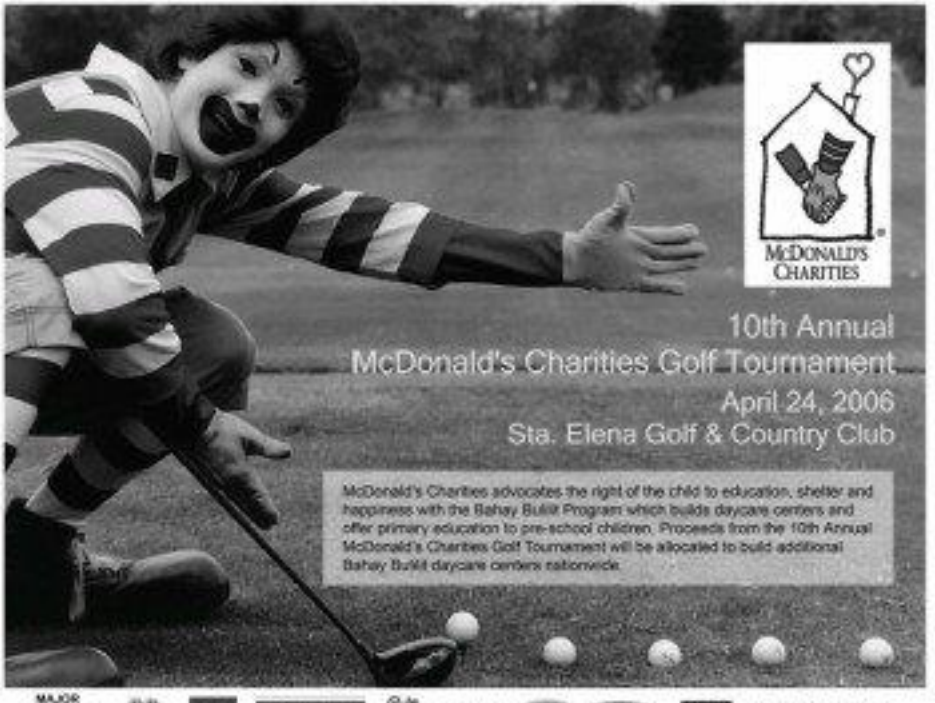
"Most of the race we were competing against a local boat, Rainbow, which was two years ago. Before (the last day of competition), we were tied with Rainbow," said Schwab.

Also the winner in 1997, 2000, 2001 and 2002, Schwab noted that the cooperative winds also boosted his crew's campaign.

"We were not sure if we could win it," he added. "But the race turned out to be very good because the wind was quite consistent."

Also on board Centennial were Capt. Tess Tadeo-Archbold and co-owner Rep. Sonny Catanduanes in the IRC Cruiser Race, Mirabil, owned by Claudio Alfaro of the Philippines, upstaged 10 points for a second place finish, just four points behind winner Je de Bus. Yoga of Scotland's Allen Brandt settled for third place with 23 points.

Completing the winners in the PY Cruising class are Wanta of the Philippines' Edwin Alfaro with eight points and Hot Shot of Japan's Seiji Kinoshara with 14 points.



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Spurs, Cavs get off to hot starts

Parker leads San Antonio rout of Sacramento; Clippers pip Nuggets

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—TONY PARKER scored 25 points as San Antonio began defense of their National Basketball Association title with a 122-88 thrashing of Sacramento on Saturday.

"This is the playoffs and everybody is motivated," Spurs's Parker said.

"In 2004, when we were defending the title, we got respect once it was done, I think everybody is ready. We're now going to shoot like first-every night. It's just one of those things."

The Los Angeles Clippers held off the Denver Nuggets for their first post-season win in nine years as they rallied 98to1 matchup at Saturday.

Seeking their fourth title in eight years, the top-seeded Spurs were unrelenting against the eighth-seeded Kings in the opener of their Western Conference first-round series.

Parker scored 22 of his 25 points in the first half, when the Spurs shot a scarring 66 percent (26-of-201) from the field and tallied a season-high 73 points.

Tony Parker scored 18 points for the Spurs, who had seven players in double figures, led by as many as 37 points and finished at 57.3 percent (122-of-213).

"We made shots tonight," Parker summed said. "We didn't expect such a large margin against them. We need to come ready for the next game and be ready to grind it out."

Since the acquisition of Jim Amot on Jan. 26, Sacramento had discovered defense, going 26-14 while allowing just 94.2 points per game. Artest went so far as to boldly predict that the Kings would win the championship.

However, that defense disappeared as Parker penetrated at will, scoring and setting up teammates.

He scored 16 points in the first quarter as San Antonio raced to a 31-24 lead.

The onslaught began in the second quarter, when the Spurs scored 41 points and built the lead to 73-39 at halftime.

The Clippers hoped Sam Cassell would make them his playoffs. With more effort like that of day's, he may carry them much further.

Cassell had 19 points and seven assists against six turnovers and Elton Brand added 21 points and a big block down the stretch as the Clippers rewarded a 89-87 victory over the Nuggets in game one of their first-round series.

"This is big. This is one the Clippers teams of the past," Cassell said. AFP

LEBRON James stones everybody here to make a playoff debut. He came up with a triple-double right in Game One and leads the Cavaliers past the Washington Wizards.

James lifts Cleveland past Washington; Heat fry Bulls

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES made a spectacular National Basketball Association playoff debut Saturday, becoming just the third player to post a triple-double in his first post-season game.

James's 32 points 11 assists and 11 rebounds powered the Cleveland Cavaliers past Washington Wizards, 97-86, in the day's second Eastern Conference clash, the Miami Heat beat the Chicago Bulls, 111-106.

But the day belonged to James, as the 21-year-old superpower forward produced his 10th career triple-double and became the second youngest player in NBA playoff history with double-figure statistics in three categories in a game, outdone only by legend Magic Johnson.

Only James, Johnson in 1980 and Johnny McCarthy in 1960 have achieved the feat in a playoff debut.

"King James" admitted the effort surprised even him during a game in which the Cavaliers, who had not reached the playoffs since 1998, took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven first-round series. Game Two will be played here on Sunday.

"I've had a lot of big games but this is one of the best no-one-two," James said. "The way we played today it was magnificent."

James scored 39 points in the first half, lifting Cleveland to a 50-30 half-time lead, and the Cavaliers kept the edge throughout a dominating second half.

"It was overwhelming. I expected—high intensity crowd, very passionate crowned," James said. "I just wanted us to come out and play hard and protect the home court."

Driving to the basket and taking bumps from Wizards defenders time after time, James sent a message that he would not be defeated in his long-awaited playoff debut.

"I had an idea (but he had) a game-plan," Cleveland coach Mike Brown said. "He never ceases to amaze me. The things that he does offensively just blow you away."

The Cavaliers improved to James' rookie season and had just seven 42-40 loss but the Final Eastern Conference playoff berth on a to-leader.

The Cavaliers have not won a playoff series since 1993, when James was only eight years old. And James realizes that to advance past the Wizards, Cleveland must continue to play as well as they did in the opener.

"We're going to have to play the same way we did tonight," James said. "We just need to come in and get as many defensive stops as we can."

In Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 34 of his 38 points in the fourth quarter and Shaquille O'Neal had 27 points and 16 rebounds as the Heat held off the tenacious Bulls to take a 1-0 lead in their series.

James Williams scored 17 points for the second-seeded Heat, who shot 63 percent from the field in the first half but had to scramble in the fourth quarter to turn back a rally by the seventh-seeded Bulls.

The Heat never opened to become a bit of attention, as the Heat host Dwight Howard to an ejection in the second quarter and Wade to cramps in the final minute. AFP

FEDERER: I'm ready for Nadal

Klitschko stops Byrd in seventh round

BERLIN, GERMANY—TYSON TIME. Wladimir Klitschko refused to let the monster outside Chris Byrd get the distance.

The Ukrainian stopped Byrd in the seventh round of a one-sided fight to gain the IBF heavyweight title on Saturday.

Klitschko's right hook finished off the American 41 seconds into the round, the second time Byrd was floored in the fight.

The woman was similar to their first encounter in October 2001. Byrd also lost that bout, although he controversial knockdown on his way to taking a decision.

This time around Klitschko—executing American fellow Emanuel Steward's strategy flawlessly—finished off Byrd early. It began in the third round when Byrd, dropping his hands for a second, took a pair of hard left-right combinations from the 2-meter (6-foot-6) Klitschko.

"I was like a mannequin playing score," Klitschko said.

After the fight, Klitschko first went to speak to his family, then to Byrd's trainer and father, Joe.

"He doesn't be proud—I have never seen anybody take that much punishment and come back," Klitschko said.

In the fifth round, Byrd climbed to his feet after being knocked down then withstood a barrage of shots. He took a breather for more than a minute as 54,000 spectators roared until Klitschko backed off. Byrd wasted his gloves at Klitschko, telling his opponent to come at him.

"He's a fighter with a big, big heart," Klitschko said. "But he provoked me."

Klitschko became the third fighter from the former Soviet Union to win a heavyweight title in four months. Ruslan Chagaev won a heavyweight title in four months. Ruslan Chagaev won a heavyweight title in four months. Ruslan Chagaev won

Appleby moves into position for 2nd title

SUMMIT, TENN.—STUART APPLEBY EL-evated to position to join Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson as the only two-time winners on the US PGA Tour this year, shooting a 5-under 69 to take a two-stroke lead in the Shell Houston Open on Saturday.

Appleby had five birdies in his third straight sub-70 round at The Tournament Course at Redstone Trails at 11-under. The Australian has posted the difficult 36th, a hole he birdied at the end of with in the first round.

Sweden's Mathias Gronberg birdied the 18th for a 67 and a 12-under total. Jerry Smith (66) and Bob Estes (68) were four shots back at 16 under.

"There's a lot of golf, 20 percent of the tournament still left out there," Appleby said. "I might be leading—but that only means that I'm leading."

He won the season-opening Mercedes Championships at Kapalua for the first straight year and left a similar level of confidence this week.

"There's a feeling. It's a confident feeling that you like the way your game feels," Appleby said. "Most of the time, all the fingerbones. For some in, I've liked the way I've played and putted. Especially last [year's] confidence in me. There's a flavor there."

Appleby was one of 44 players who finished the rain-delayed second round on Saturday morning. He parred his way remaining holes for a 67 to finish at 11 under, then opened his third round with three straight pars.

AP

Annika back on top

J-Ro fires 70, trails by 11 strokes

STOCKBRIDGE, GEORGIA—SHRUGGING OFF A couple of rain delays, Annika Sorenstam shot an 8-under 64—her third straight round in the 60s—to move to the top of the leaderboard in the Florida's Natural Charity Championship on Saturday.

The start of the third round was delayed 45 minutes by rain, and play was halted again for nearly 1 h. hours while thunderstorms roared through the area. The rest of the round was played in mostly sunny conditions, though the final groups barely had enough daylight to finish up.

"The last four holes, we were playing straight into the sun and straight into the wind," Sorenstam said. "I was looking at the clock, hoping, wondering, 'Can we finish today?' It would have been quite a tough day [Monday] if we wouldn't finish, have to get up early, finish and then start over."

After seeing off late, Sorenstam was forced back to the clubhouse after pitching a couple of holes. But she got things rolling with four straight birdies to finish the front nine, sliding three putts from 9 to 12 feet.

Sorenstam scrambled at the end for the final. She hit tee-birdies on No. 17, but managed to stab a 12-foot putt to save par. Then, going for the green with her second shot at the par-5 18th, her ball clipped the crest of a hill and bounded backward and left to the ground along with a fizzle.

"My caddie told me not to get too nervous," Sorenstam said. "He told me, 'Just put it on the green. You're putting well. That's what I did."

AP

SORENSTAM makes it to the crowd.

REUTERS

ROSALES: Top 20 finish in sight.

REUTERS

HENRY: Sorenstam plays from the rough after taking a drop on a penalty.

AP

Fernandez-Castano nips Stenson in playoff; Miñoza finishes 7 down

SHANGHAI, CHINA—SPAIN'S GON-zalo Fernandez-Castano topped in a six-under birdie-putt on the first playoff hole Sunday to beat Henrik Stenson and win the Asian Open.

Stenson set the pace after the first three rounds, but Fernandez-Castano grabbed the lead on the 16th hole of the final round after chipping in from the edge for birdie.

Filipino Frankie Miñoza finished with a 288, seven strokes off the lead, after firing a 71. He was in a tie for 37th in 25th place.

Playing partner Stenson then made birdie on the 18th to level the score at 7-under par and force the playoff.

But birdies Castano shot a 2-under-par 70 on the final round, sending two-time major champion Stenson to 6-under par and into the Asian Open.

Scotland's Colin Montgomerie and Jose Filipe Lima of Portugal were tied for third at 4-under, followed by Michael Preece of New Zealand and Nicholas Gilmour of Australia at 3-under par.

Stenson held a three-stroke lead until the ninth hole, when he hit a two and three two shots trying to escape the rough. He slipped to new land of on the lower tier of the green, leaving him to three-putt the hole for a triple-bogey eight.

That wobble left him in a tussle with six other players, with the lead changing hands no less than four times. He added another birdie and a bogey to finish at 1-under par 71 for the day.

The tournament's fourth consecutive have been more different than last year's, when Ernie Els left the pack and tournament to win by 13 strokes.

The lowest round of the tournament, a 65, went to Tony Pilkadaris, who hadn't seen broken par in the first three rounds.

AP

Lack of success doesn't mean Chinese golfers aren't trying, says pro

SHANGHAI, CHINA—JUST BECAUSE CHI-nese golfers aren't winning international championships doesn't mean they aren't trying, says one of the country's top pros.

"We're all working as hard as we can. The competition is just very tough in these competitions," Liang Wenchong said on the sidelines of the Asian Open.

Liang was the only player from the host country to make the cut at the Open, ultimately finishing tied for 69th place at five-over-par on Sunday.

It was the second consecutive tournament held in China in which just a solo Chinese player survived until the weekend. Only last month's T33. Guan on the south-ern resort island of Hainan could boast more than one Chinese player on the final day—both Liang and Li Chen made the cut there.

Liang said Chinese players were hampered by a lack of opportunity to compete internationally.

"Golf is a long process, you really need the right environment," said Liang, who at No. 464 is the highest-ranked Chinese player on the Asian Tour Order of Merit.

"It's important for young players just to have the experience of playing with the big guns in these tournaments," Liang said.

The lack of success among Chinese players is one area the country's governors, who are still looking for a breakaway star to take up the mantle of 40-year-old Zhang Lianwei, the most successful Chinese player to date.

"It's definitely a concern," said Joshua Geller, the head of China marketing for ISM96, which sponsored the Asian Open and is helping fund a regional initiative by Nick Faldo to find and nurture young golfers. A China rest that was started last year is also doubling its number of tournaments to eight next year.

"We need to give it some time, but I'm very sure we will see some Chinese players in the top 10," Geller said.

AP

Riviera Invitational up April 27

MORE THAN 400 MEMBERS AND GUESTS are set to tee it up in the 8th Riviera Golf Club Invitational Tournament on April 27-30 at the Lanyar and Complex courses of Riviera in Silang, Cavite.

Reading the cast are defending champions Oca Dacquel and Helano Sig, who took the coveted title last year and will be bidding to become the first pair to claim back-to-back titles.

The Riviera Invitational is the annual two-ten game tournament of the Silang, Cavite-based golf club and it features the traditional Gala Night on the evening of the 28th of April where teams will engage in a bidding war to bet on their chances to win the tournament.

The format for the Complex course will be the net aggregate score of the team converted to Stableford points while on the Lanyar course the alternate shots (one-ball two-some) format will be used.

"The end of April will be the culmination of all our preparations for the Invitational and we expect nothing less [ ] of wide-of-competition and celebrations," said Canet Arpon the chair of the club's board of directors.

On board as the main sponsor of the tournament is Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation while Food Alchuig is joining as a Hard Beats as a hole-in-one prize on all the par 3's. Amara Airlines with a RT-trust round trip ticket and Turf Company with a golf cart will double up the hole-in-one prize on specified holes.

A Pro-Am will be raffled off to the participants during the awarding ceremonies which will again be staged in the traditional fiesta. Prizes amid. Alumni is the main equipment sponsor while the other sponsors are Pagoo, Pasajero's, Bodjuki Boy, Coca Cola and Del-monte.

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SPORTS

Schumacher sets F1 pole record

IMOLA, ENZ—MICHAEL SCHUMACHER SAW FERRARI'S FIRST WIN OF THE SEASON IN HIS grasp on Saturday after securing one of the few Formula One records not already his.

The 37-year-old's 66th career pole position allowed him to overtake Brazilian Ayrton Senna's mark of 65 set the day before the triple champion died at the same Imola circuit in the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix.

Schumacher won the race for Benetton that bleak afternoon and, 12 years on, the prospect of an 86th victory appeared to fill him with more excitement than the aforementioned historic feat.

"It is very rare to be back on pole again and of course the fact it is my 66th and so a new record is something very special for me," said the seven-time champion who has not won since June last year.

He already had the most wins, titles, points and fastest laps, as well as other records such as the most wins in a season (13), most successive wins in a single season (seven) and most podium (143).

If the German overcomes new year he could also take the record for race starts from Rubens Barrichello. The retired Italian now had 256 to Schumacher's current tally of 254.

Schumacher, dominant in 2004, has not won since topping the 05 Grand Prix. *Reuters*

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Editor Ernesto S. Velarde

Fear of the familiar, murder and mystery

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

DESPITE SEVERAL CLEVER PLOT TWISTS, the new streamer "Shrouded" is unspectacularly crafted.

Directed by newcomer Rahyan Carlos, nephew of late filmmaker Lorenzo "Chanting" Carlos, the horror flick takes its sweet time questioning local superstitious customs while donning a mystical underbelly that provides the bloat inducing ebullience. There are ghosts, murder memories and metaphysical inclinations meshed into an atmospheric set piece that isn't always scary when it wants to be.

This is largely because we've seen some of these concepts tackled exceptionally well before. The whole "Sixth Sense" or he's been dead for ten years twist had gotten crucial by the time it became a joke in "Friends" years ago. Its is the idea that the skeptic turned believer hero, Bubbleyum Shah (Jolanda Della), has to be in a state of denial for a long time before accepting that he and his girlfriend Eileen (Iya Villania) have been targeted by the homicidal undead. But again, while the time-versus-the-unknown aspect ends up the way it's expected to, it can't be denied that both story and premise were handled deftly.

The old townsfolk's superstitions about death play a big part in conveying the unexplained apparitions of Noah's recently deceased friend Damian (Pedro Cantos) with the reappearance of another childhood friend, the beautiful assistant Breen (Mariane Rivera). Subsequent attempts at Damian or Noah's survival disregard the Three superstitions which the town elders believe, carries corresponding penalties. The predictably strained Eileen, ululating needs, tests the receiving end of said consequences, which can't be into Ecstasy Joel Durnal — none the easy we dead, disfigured people.

It's a relief that Villania isn't the loud, hyperactive TV host and wispy here; she's effectively the besieged, oppressive woman in victim that worlds well opposite Pedro's calm and reluctant policeman-adviser. Director Carlos and screenwriter Anthony Perales' script exceeds cardible dialogue, it's easy to empathize and accept what the characters are saying. They also refrain, thankfully, from doling cliched declarations proven or losing themselves in corny chatter that belabor the obvious.

Cantos makes one screaming looking ghoul, and the editing pulls were off that. But why can't bold movie ghosts look totally removed from the restrained image of the south-pole, glaring and

RAM A.V.

MURAL in the FPJ Hall of Memorabilia Museum

FPJ: Nationalist or artist?

How RP movies' Da King made it to the lauded list

By Rayati San Diego Jr.

THE INCLUSION OF A MOVIE ACTOR IN the list of nominees for National Artist had previously raised eyebrows.

Undeterred, movie mogul Joe, executive director of the Movie Producers Workers Foundation Inc. (Mowelfund), drafted a concept paper titled "Fernando Poe Jr.: The Icon in Complete Artist."

FPJ's nomination was supported by the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences.

But recalled: "The paper was submitted as part of the requirements for National Artist. We at Mowelfund also prepared a 116-minute PowerPoint presentation shown to the joint boards of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines on March 24."

"Horror screaming" was how Boo described her time in front of the panelists, which included colleagues Nestor O. Torre and Behn Cervantes. "It was like defending a thesis."

Lucky that month, Boo made Comelec on the first session action to file material for the Order of National Artists.

"Previous honorees hand the film industry have all been directors...Gerry de Leon, Lamberto Avellana, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal and Eddie Romero." Boo explained. Nevertheless, Hesus de la Paz was honored for her work in the comedia. Likewise, Rolando Tinio received his award for theater and literature."

FPJ, A2-3

Aga tells good friend Sharon to lose weight

By Maximo R. Cruz

AGA MUHLACH IS determined to lose weight.

He's so into it, in fact, that he's been encouraging close friends to do the same if they need to.

Among those friends is singer-actress Sharon Cuneta.

"I told her it's wrong to think that people should accept you just the way you are. I said we owed it to the public to look good," the proud-uttering at he told Inquirer Entertainment in an exclusive interview on Thursday. "I told her, 'If you want to go on making movies, it's your responsibility to your fans to stay fit.'"

In a previous interview with Inquirer, Sharon admitted that she was unable to shed weight as fast as she'd like to. She gained the most weight, she said, after giving birth to her third child, Miel. She said she was currently on the South Beach diet.

Aga pointed out: "It's not easy, especially for those of us who have been heavy for quite a while. Losing weight definitely takes time after many years of not working out, of just eating and doing nothing. I played basketball recently and I couldn't move freely. My knees have started to ache because of all the weight I'm carrying."

Aga and Sharon are about to do a comedy for Star Cinema, to be directed by Lauren Dyogi. "It will be an adult romance film, and will be

AGA Muhlach: "We owe it to the fans."

RAM A.V.

POSTBOY — BY BELL AMORO

A. CHEN — BY EDGAR AMORA

MARVIN — BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY — BY PIC JUNIOR

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

HUTTS — BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

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DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN MANALANG

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DAILY CROSSWORD

KIBO MACHINE — BY MARK KABIGTING

LONTONGITS — BY ELIZABETH CHONG LO

TALDOK — BY RAFU AND SETSUH MUMBURING

FPJ: Nationalist or artist?

'It is difficult to separate the man from the artist, the real from the reel'

BOOTS Aiman Rios and Susan Roces at the inauguration of the FPJ Hall, dedicated to National Artists for Film, Ike Lumbera-Arellano and Danny de Leon (background).

Pantagraph A2-3

Ben provided in-person [illegible] ment a copy of the [illegible] paper, in which she described the late Action King as "a multi-awarded actor, producer, [illegible] director and widely acclaimed industry leader."

3 points

In her paper, she raised three main points in support of Poe's inclusion in the honor roll. "He [illegible] significance to the [illegible] cultural heritage... He promoted [illegible] values ... represented which spanned the development of a national cultural identity, particularly, by that of Jose de la Cruz as Julio Madiaga. He dedicated 50 of his 65 years to the film industry..."

In his filmography, Ben noted, FPJ often portrayed the quiet, [illegible] underdog ("Indio," "Kuya Ben," "Iisang Tinig Tinig") or the mythical hero ("Panday," "Ang Alamat," "Ito Ang Batas").

Liberator

His screen characters often "reclaimed themselves from social injustices... and liberated his townspeople from oppression and the bondage of poverty."

Ben pointed out that "it is difficult to separate the man from the artist, the real from the reel... [because] as many and seemingly weird and diverse, [his movie] characters are classified from his persona, rather than his persona being subsumed in celluloid heroism."

She invoked scholarly studies by film historians Joseph Nolasco and Alfonso Sison.

Fantasies

The latter acknowledged that FPJ's mixed-up[illegible] as hell have allow the masses "to live out [their] intimate dreams and fantasies as a people."

Nolasco lauded FPJ's classic [illegible] of youth empowerment: "[he] free them from [illegible] ship... [because] true liberation ... [can] largely be their own hands."

Film producer Martha Hurtado, a close ally of the late Mr. Sison [illegible], opined, "FPJ is a nationalist first and an artist second. I hope people will look beyond his awards as actor/director and seriously study his body of work."

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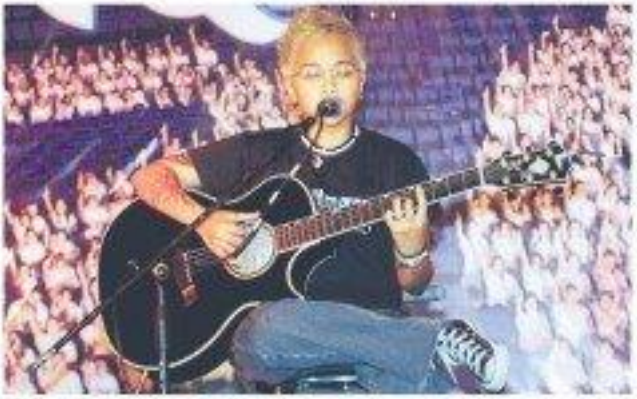


AIZA Seguerra: 'I'm a better person now, with my life in order.'

The reticent Aiza Seguerra opens up—okay, just a little

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FOR SOMEONE WHO GREW UP IN SHOW BIZ, Aiza Seguerra still seems remarkably reticent.

She was last really embraced when Inquirer.net entertainment caught up with her. With a little nothing, however, she opened up about her friend and mentor Vic Sotto, growing up on the set of "Okay Ka, Fairy Ko," her pet dogs, her movies and her current relationship.

Perhaps it helped that girlfriend Chris and pet Shih Tzu Muncheng were around. After all, Aiza herself has said she has become more pensive because of these loves of her life.

What are you doing at the moment?

Several concerts for this month and next. And I'm a regular judge for ASAP-CBSM talent show "Little Big Star."

Do you have a new album?

Maybe soon. I plan to go independent but I'm not sure yet.

What can we expect from the new album, musically?

Still the same-sound acoustic pop, but with a slight change. What that will be, I don't know yet.

How have you grown as an artist?

I'm no longer afraid to tackle songs that have depth, or to try different arrangements. It's also more focused now.

In fact, I want to be more involved in my next album. Apart from singing, I also want to venture into the other aspects of recording process, like producing, maybe... If I like to work behind the scenes.

What's the CD in your player right now?

My iPod, you mean? All the albums of The Beatles. Different types of music. There's rock n' roll, classical, the like.

Before Muncheng, you had a pet iguana?

I had two iguanas. Are iguanas in old or something (haha). They're not goodbye to this world). Now I have 13 dogs at home, different breeds—two Shih Tzus, a Dachshund, a Labrador, a Chow Chow and several mixed-breeds).

Your partner likes dogs, too?

Yeh.

How are you adjusting to this new relationship?

Well, I don't really ask about it.

That how has it changed you as a performer?

A lot. It has changed me in a huge way—not just as a performer, but also as a person. I think I'm a better person now.

In what way?

In many ways. When I look at the new me and compare it with the old me, I can see and I can tell... I know that my life is in order now.

One lesson from this relationship?

Well, that it takes work.

Patience, you mean? Which you are also apply to your work?

Yes. You should always put your heart in it—everything. Never hurt yourself. When you do something, you should do it whole-heartedly and you should enjoy every minute of it.

Here's you cousin? She used to go with you on stage shows.

Hey cousin and daddy are okay. When I moved to, she returned to her go. Good thing she's now busy with her new extra-curricular activities. She's a dream ball in the morning, she wakes me/her to some classes in the evening, she goes ballroom dancing.

You worked with your original TV mate, Alec Dimson, in your last movie, "Kimmy Kabisote 2."

I was so happy the first time I saw her on the set. But now she's Ina Magnata (the grandma). How things have changed! We shared a dressing room, so we kept talking the whole time. Other hurs no doubt!

Remembering...

Yeh. Like we were not actors... just like one big family on the set. We ate together, had junk food. Sir memorable. I always enjoy myself when I work with Bossing Vic. Always. He's great, our lady a per, always on time. He takes care of his co-workers.

You mean like a father to you?

In all of us. When I started working with him I was three, turning four. Now, I'm 22. That's almost 20 years.

What are the plans for your 20th anniversary (this year)?

I don't know yet. It's not just celebration. I'm just happy and thankful that I lasted this long.

Plans about plans for the future?

I'd like to go back to school and take up either Film or Criminal Justice.

In perfect harmony both onstage and off

"IT'S HARD WORKING WITH my wife," sings Robert Seña-jesus.

"Still, it's not easy working with him, either," Isay Alvarez, also in song, retorts.

This is not the start of a domestic dispute. The fellow are actually celebrating perfect harmony before it's to test. Duetsings and off, they are in perfect pitch.

In case: "It can be challenging because every video we're doing is a trip, we end up choosing in the car or in the dining room. bright ideas crop up. Then we're always together, we never stop working."

She says, "It's to our advantage. He likes to plan and take things one at a time. I'm the exact opposite. Like most women, I'm used to multi-tasking. I can juggle various tasks at the same time."

Still, they make things work. "Because at the end of the day," they agree, "we have to see the best in each other."

No rivalry

"There's no rivalry," he assures. "He can be especially critical of each other's work. In fact, she can be too honest."

"It's all in the timing," she points out. "I can tell him his strengths and weaknesses, but I can't just blurt it out. I respect his work. I can suggest, but I never impose."

Actually, both comment freely on the charities.

As fans do they smile disapprovingly? "He knows when to latch off, and that's when I'm getting [his] headed," she says.

He confirms this. "I try to make light of the situation and watch a joke."

If they inevitably finish each other's sentences, it's because they've been friends since 1992 (while working on the local play "Magdenda Rio") and swapsbasses since 1993 (while acting in the Petit Rod musical "Miss Saigon").

"We were best buddies first," she says.

"Then, one day I asked her out to dinner," he says.

"My initial reaction was: 'You're crazy!'" she says.

"She told me to cuddle something of myself then," he says, laughing.

"I wanted to challenge him," she explains.

He continues: "Later, I guested in Sen Sabungit's homecoming concert in the PICC. I got good feedback from the public and the press. So when I returned in London, I showed her all my newspaper clippings!"

"Sana 'we do shows together," she says. "We're effective as a husband and wife team."

Last year, their show "Love You, Hate You, Love You" had SRO musical thrills.

But they also have individual ventures. He worked on the musical "Prophet Jose"; she did the comedy troupe "The Anghargot-tables."

If you ask them, though, their most successful "projects" as a couple are their two kids—Roberto, 13, and Emilio, 6.

The two kids are following in their parents' footsteps.

"Emilio is a born performer," Isay says. "Roberto plays the guitar very well."

"We encourage them, but we don't push them," says Robert.

"We don't bring them to our shows abroad," she adds. "These trips make them more open-minded."

He explains: "That way they can see the difference between the Philippines and our South-east Asian neighbors, for example, and hopefully that will inspire them to do something for our country." Beyond San Diego Jr.

ROBERT Seña-jesus and Isay Alvarez

Forget 'pogi' rock: Go for that itchy, fuzzy, worm-y feeling!

AS THEY SAY, FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT. And from all discernible indications, the boys in the band Inedible@rama, chief onstage in their alleyn shirts with matching neckties, all present a united front.

They could very well be their generation's Spin Doctors or Hootie and the Blowfish.

Whatever.

Forget "pogi rock." An official web site describes their band's music as "itchy and happy."

It's best to let these college buddies do the talking.

"We different kinds of rock combined," drummer Ian Nicolas describes when they proudly refer to as their sophomore "If you listen to our latest album ('Moonshine Show,' Universal Records), it doesn't fall under any single category."

Diverse influences

"That's because of our diverse influences," says frontie Kelvin Yu, who had a hit role in the indie film "Big Time," the theme song of which, "Salapi," is included in "Moonshine Show." "But our common inspiration is The Beatles."

"I also listen to Eddie Peregrina and Edwin Espiritu," says guitarist Chino Singson. "The Eraserheads also influenced us in our album."

Currently playing on their iPod are such diverse sounds as AC/DC, Sting, Led Zeppelin, Bon Jovi, Def Leppard, Michael Jackson and Madonna.

"We're 1980s kids," Nicolas admits.

On cue, Singson sings the old '80s novelty-era anthem, "Chasing my Filipina to Manila."

The main mention of the 1980s happens then Yu and Nicolas recall their childhood days in area nostalgia about new fashion.

"High-cut rubber shoes," says guitarist Jugo Jaguros.

"To which you tuck your baseo pants," he says, hollering.

"Le Tigre and Lacoste shirts, espadrilles and popular shoes," says Singson.

"Drainpipes, shoulderless or Bedroom Batas," Nicolas quips on, laughing.

Back then, they were grade-schoolers "in khaki short pants" then.

Their years coincided with the 1986 EDSA, the same time as the rock explosion ignited by Ernest Scotch, Tootsie et al.

"We're glad that the band scene is alive once more," Singson shares. "It's like the 1980s all over again."

"It's just a cycle," Jaguros offers.

The flip-side of rock resurgence, however, is the plagiarism controversy breeding some local bands.

Jaguros assesses a diplomatic view: "Despite how it seems challenging for so long that other bands are bound to happen..."

"I just hope it's not deliberate," Yu says.

"It's sad because we know that Filipinos are very much capable of coming up with good original songs," Singson asserts.

They shouldn't pay attention to copycats," Nicolas says. "Instead look at Donald Trump or the music makers who don't plagiarize ... like us."

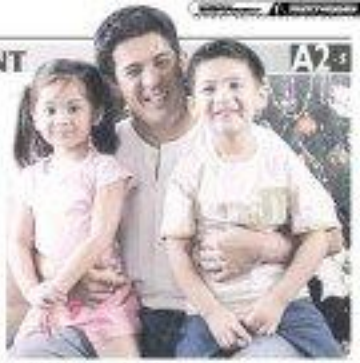
On that note, the conversation is steered back to their new album, a favorite cut is "Soap Opera."

"It sounds funny, but the message is serious," says Nicolas. "It's satirical. It takes up our observations about the entertainment industry in the Philippines."

ITCHY/WORMY: ex-PDF's anniversary party: Children of the 1980s.

Aga tells good friend Sharon . . .

from page A2-1



AGA MITHOUSA ROJAS and Auntie

about abroad," Aga said of the upcoming project. "So order for our issues up in work. Sharon and I should look good together. When we look at each other, she should fall in love with me, and I with her."

Which, he implied, might not be plausible because one is straight and one's not.

Aga discovered he had hypertension worldwide—very high levels of cholesterol in his bloodstream—early last year.

"I also found out that being thin doesn't mean you're healthy. That's when I included oatmeal in my diet," said Aga, who is the newest endorser of Quaker Oats. "I'm starting to lose weight. I think because I'm eating right. Also, I go to the gym more a day—for weights, then for boxing. I have made this my lifestyle. So there! (sic). Hopefully, for-ever-more."

On the other hand, he said, his wife Charlene, a sweet tooth, is calling her intake of sugar "fortunately the last on weight problem. Since she grew up in the States, she's used to not eating rice and pork. She loves salads and fish. The twins (Hanako and Andrea) are taking oatmeal, too."

How do you pick the products you will endorse?

We say yes to endorsing products that you really believe in. You don't want to endorse for example, a piece of lotion that you know would hurt's people and the environment. I choose to promote products that I actually use at home.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) filed a tax evasion case against Regine Velasquez when she failed to declare her earnings from endorsing Kendi in 2003. Are you still game in this department?

They will never have a case against me. I pay my taxes. Ahhh! meanie org (ooh-h-). And why shouldn't I? Isn't that it's an open secret that a lot of Filipinos are not truthful when it comes to paying their taxes. This is because they don't trust government officials with their money. They know that the money they give is not put to good use.

These officials can't even provide decent schools for children in the provinces. You don't have to go far. Just look around. People are sleep-pointed with the lack of support from the government. Billions and billions of money are being stolen by corrupt officials.

You're successful as a father, businessman and actor. What else do you hope to achieve?

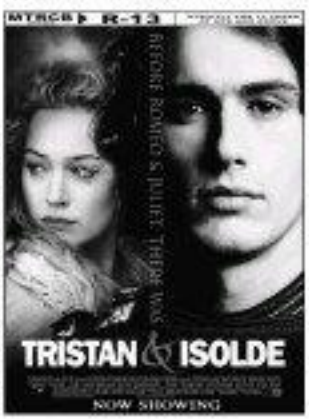
When I really wish for is for this country to achieve its former status as one of the most prosperous in Asia. I hope for people in the government to regain the trust of Filipinos. When that happens, everything will be better for us.

Fear of the familiar . . .

From page A2-1

under-lit gore in funeral wears' his, and the other supernatural beings here, while sporting convincing and fiercely gruesome makeup, aren't here appeared more to be missing half they seemed many times before.

"Pasaubin" has polished but adventurous cinematography, although that goes overboard in particular scene with Noah, Eileen, and the amulet merchant (Gordon Gonzalez) near the climax. The conversation among the three is awkward, as the camera zooms in each of them while they talk and darts are shot with marching band, unbelieving visual effects. Unless I'm alone, the movie is still rarely drawn. And the psychedelic locales and sets add a chilling quality to the visuals, as do the special effects that were used sparingly but made the black butterflies in some scenes, a well-rounding Gonzo, etc.). And it doesn't hurt that Judy's rose adds extra zing and creepiness to the whole wonderful pair-up.



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MALL CINEMAS

1	D' LUCKY ONES	2	PANAHON	3	SUBMERGED
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G1	1 D' LUCKY ONES	2 EIGHT BELOW	3 PANAHON	4 SUBMERGED
G4	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	2 D' LUCKY ONES	3 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	
	4 SUBMERGED	5 JUST FRIENDS	6 DON'T BELOW	7 PANAHON
GB1	1 EIGHT BELOW		2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	
GB3	1 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		2 EIGHT BELOW	
	3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES	4 KENT	5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	
ATC	1 EIGHT BELOW		2 D' LUCKY ONES	
	3 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	4 PANAHON	5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	
ACC	1 EIGHT BELOW	2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	3 SHE'S THE MAN	4 D' LUCKY ONES
M2	1 D' LUCKY ONES		2 SUBMERGED	
	3 PANAHON	4 DON'T BELOW	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	

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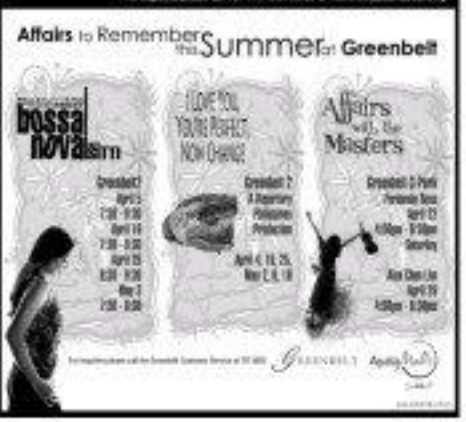

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CINEMA 2
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BANDERAS
ICE AGE 2
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SUBMERGED
JUST FRIENDS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE
AMERICAN SOLDIERS

CINEMA 3
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
SUBMERGED
PARAHAN
MOMENTS OF LOVE
VENUS
AMERICAN SOLDIERS

CINEMA 4
ULTRAVIOLET
BANDERAS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
EIGHT BELOW
D LUCKY ONES
PARAHAN
SUBMERGED
MOMENTS OF LOVE
ICE AGE 2
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
VENUS
AMERICAN SOLDIERS

CINEMA 5
ICE AGE 2
SUBMERGED
EIGHT BELOW
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
BANDERAS
MOMENTS OF LOVE
JUST FRIENDS

CINEMA 6
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
SUBMERGED
PARAHAN
ICE AGE 2
BANDERAS
MOMENTS OF LOVE
D LUCKY ONES
ESKWELA

CINEMA 7
PARAHAN
ICE AGE 2
EIGHT BELOW
D LUCKY ONES

CINEMA 8
ICE AGE 2
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
EIGHT BELOW

CINEMA 9
ICE AGE 2
EIGHT BELOW
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
MOMENTS OF LOVE
D LUCKY ONES
PARAHAN

CINEMA 10
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
ICE AGE 2
EIGHT BELOW

CINEMA 11
ICE AGE 2
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
EIGHT BELOW

CINEMA 1
PARAHAN
ULTRAVIOLET
D LUCKY ONES
EIGHT BELOW

CINEMA 2
EIGHT BELOW
PARAHAN
D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE

CINEMA 3
EIGHT BELOW
D LUCKY ONES
PARAHAN
ICE AGE 2

CINEMA 4
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SHAGGY DOG
ULTRAVIOLET
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LEGEND
CINEMA 5
FINAL DESTINATION 3
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CINEMA 7
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D LUCKY ONES

VIEWERS DISCRETION
CINEMA 8
SHE'S THE MAN
RESERVED
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ULTRAVIOLET
PARAHAN
ICE AGE 2
RESERVED
EIGHT BELOW

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JUST FRIENDS
STAUS QUO
ICE AGE 2
MOMENTS OF LOVE
D LUCKY ONES

CINEMA 10
ICE AGE 2
PARAHAN
FINAL DESTINATION 3
D LUCKY ONES

CINEMA 11
D LUCKY ONES
PARAHAN
EIGHT BELOW
ICE AGE 2

CINEMA 12
EIGHT BELOW
EVENSIE TALL STORY
D LUCKY ONES
JUST FRIENDS
SHAGGY DOG
ULTRAVIOLET

CINEMA 13
BANDERAS
EIGHT BELOW
D LUCKY ONES
ICE AGE 2

Inspiring story of huskies as heroes

THE FILM "EIGHT BELOW" IS DELIGHTFUL and affecting (viewers with its unusual story (inspired by actual events, yet) about eleven dogs in Antarctica who survived for more than 170 days on their own, after their owners had to forced due to a great storm.

Before the location set off to their own devices, however, the producers sensibly and wisely makes sure their viewers have gotten to care a lot for the sled dogs and their humanoids, Jerry (Paul Walker).

Thus, when he's forced to leave, the strong bond they've forged sustains them for months on end, despite their being separated by thousands of miles, until they're finally reunited at their end.

The "villain" in the movie is an ominous, self-animated celestial (Bruce Greenwood) who discovers a rare meteorite in Antarctica with the helped Jerry and his sled dogs.

They end up saving his life, but he refuses to help Jerry rescue the stranded huskies—until a plot twist knocks some sense into his meteorite-hard noggin, and somewhat gratitude into his heart.

Because emotions aside, director Frank Marshall wisely chooses to focus on the latest dogs (to made of the film's running time.

He does succumb to the temptation to resort to anthropomorphism once in a while, but in the movie's most effective scenes, the dogs touch viewers' hearts deeply by being emotion, patient and noble.

Even as summer days in event, they survive from day to day, until the days have become weeks, then months, and the approaching silence threatens to rob all possible hope of survival.

There, just in the nick of time, the remainders has felt all-important change of mind and heart, and the film finally hands out as its well-deserved happy ending.

"Eight Below" works because viewers want its central dog-human relationship to be affirmed by the movie's "mission about" events.

When to take, the film ends up inspiring members of the audience to believe that, things will turn out well for them, too, if only they'll persevere when the going gets really tough.

It's a lot to ask, to be sure, and the movie does say in the middle, but these noble and emotion holders make it work.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Viewers welcome miraculous events

'24 hours'

CLOSE to a back with its fifth couple, "24 Hours," from the platinum album "Half Empty, Half Full." Pete Ludmaker's song is about running on and holding on.

The "24 Hours" music video—by Bobby Bonifacio Jr. and Quark Henares—will be launched in a fundraiser at Egos, on April 29 at Eastwood City Plaza, Libis, QC. On the site, it will premiere on the MYX music video channel.

Effective Oral Presentation

A WORKSHOP on Effective Oral Presentation will be held at Makati starting May 15 at the Century Complex, Ruby City. Topics include overcoming stage fright, understanding your audience, planning and organizing your presentation, delivery and visual aids. Contact Mario Olivas, Convenor, at 813-3983.

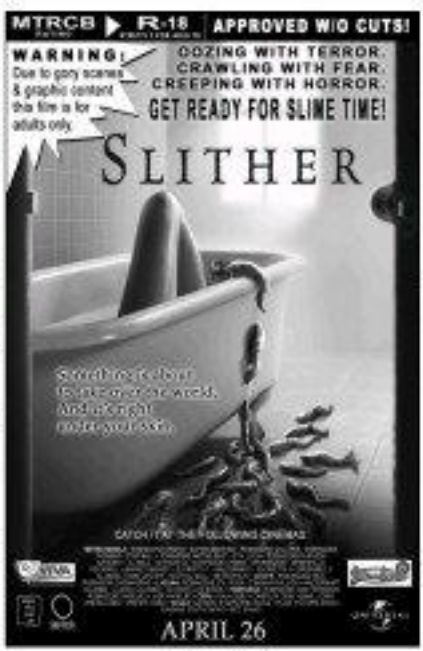
'Mission: Impossible III' preview

CHECK a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the blockbuster movie, "Mission: Impossible III" on HBO's "The Big Preview" at 8 p.m. on April 30. A free audience could win an all-expense-paid trip for two to attend the film's gala premiere in Tokyo. In addition, 150 pairs of tickets to the film's advance May 1 screening here are up for grabs for those who register for the contest to go to Japan. Log on to http://www.hbo.com/movies/.

New filmmakers

"THE HILLS Have Eyes," scripted by Wes Craven, is directed by new filmmaker Alejandro Aja. Only 27 years old, Aja spent his formative years assisting his director father, Alexandro Aroady. At 18, he says his long, love collaborator, Gregory Levasseur, who would become a visionary sculptor and art director.

At 18, Aja and Levasseur's "Over the Rainbow" received a Cannes Film Festival nomination for Best Short film. Their joint labor, their first feature, "Furia," was nominated for a Saturn award for best foreign film. Then, the pair earned a reputation at the Toronto and Sundance film festivals with "High Tension," scripting in a wide US release for the small French film.



Lovable & wild

KID FIT

THE CITY IS A JUNGLE FOR three lovable creatures of Walt Disney Pictures' "The Wild": Samson the lion, Benny the squirrel, Ryan the young lion, Nigel the koala, Bridget the gazelle, Kinzo the wildebeest and Lucy the anaconda. Opening in Philippine theaters on Wednesday, "The Wild" is about the odd pairs ... main adventures in the New York Zoo—stopping one of their comfort zones to go on a daring downtown rescue of one of their own.

FEEDBACK

FROM Mona Cabrera, Rosvital City, and Geraldine Lunamona, Iloilo City:

Bianca and Zanjoe really look good together and they are happy together. Tender, light. I'm Bianca. We support you!

Lara Croft back to tomb raiding

DALLAS...SCORCHED CLAD SEXchanselegate Lara Croft is back for more danger and hidden treasure in "Tomb Raider: Legend."

The game ($49.99 for PlayStation 2 and Xbox, $59.99 for Xbox 360, $39.99 for personal computers) revives a long-suffering franchise.

The decline began with two dismal movies starring Angelina Jolie: "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" in 2001 and "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life" in 2003. Also in 2003 came "Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness," which let tedious controls and glitchy graphics.

Skimpy steps

It seemed as if Croft's glory days' been a decade ago were over.

But with "Legend," Eidos Interactive has liberated the busty explorer heroine by letting Croft do what she does best: raid tombs for treasures, solving puzzles along the way.

This refresh Croft still wears her skimpy outfit consisting of combat boots, shorts and a tank top. She revealing physique is modest, too, though she's more athletic and not as outrageously proportioned as before.

This time, however, more productive Croft translation into a game that's much more enjoyable to play than previous games in the series.

The controls are more crisp and precise than they've ever been. Croft's jumps, shins and dangles off cliffs and swinging vines like a monkey are fluid and intuitive. Navigating is still a bit clunky.

As the name implies, "Legend" explores some of Croft's roots, beginning with a plane crash with her mother in the Himalayas when she was just 9. Then there's some solid story involving mystic Templeton, but really this ain't a game you'll buy for a deep plot.

Croft's known for dual-wielding pistols, and packing heat certainly has its uses in the booby-trapped environments she'll explore in Bolivia, the Himalayas, Japan and other spots around the globe.

Dual-effect add-on new gadgets is a magnetic grappling tool. You can use it to shoot a cable in the distance to grab enemies, pull open stone doorways and to swing Tarzan-style across otherwise impassible chasms.

"Legend" uses real-world physics and many objects can be used strategically: piles of rocks can be pushed down hills, blindly to crush foes, for example.

There's little difference between the various versions in terms of gameplay.

If there are any faults to be found, it's the ease with which I breezed through the game.

Two days of casual play and I was done. But it's a good sign that I was left wanting more. Mart Shoemaker, AP

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

1 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 ICE AGE 2
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 JUST FRIENDS

GUARANTEED SEATS

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JUST FRIENDS
AMERICAN HAUNTING
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GREENHILLS CINEMAS

THEATRE MALL
PROMENADE
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2 SUBMERGE
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4 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
5 EIGHT BELOW

Bring the Barkadas!
SCREAM ALL U CAN APRIL 26
PG-13
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
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CHEER FACTOR

Gruenos & Juliet

LOS ANGELES—PAMela Adlon (who's Bobby Hill's voice and Chloe's plus a version of Bruce Willis' wife) premiered by animated premiere, The Hollywood Reporter said. Adlon's Rocket Pictures will co-produce, with Disney's Miramax distributing, "Gruenos and Juliet," borrowing from William Shakespeare. AFP

WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU

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OPENS APRIL 26

Amalia Fuentes' disappearing act

AND THEN SHE WAS GONE!

Televiewers are wondering why the interview with veteran actress Amalia Fuentes on "Startalk" on Saturday abruptly went off the air.

Amalia was admonishing one-in-law Albert Martinez yet again (she's been at it for weeks) over past disagreements... and in the process, thrashing her own daughter, Liezl, our guest. Suddenly she was overtaken by commercials.

When the show resumed, Amalia was gone. And Butch Francisco, one of the show hosts who was interviewing her, just said she threatened to contact Albert for a comment but failed.

Fine with us. We were very uncomfortable with what we saw and heard, anyway.

Catching up

All is but indications with her paramour seems to be catching up with Ethel Booba. Ethel, 7 is reportedly canceling her magazine show "Ishoga Ibaida" and readying to propose "Bates Challenge."

To the rescue

Ethel's "EC" co-host Boots Belardo is quick to the rescue: "It's awful to blame Ethel that personal life has nothing to do with the changes in the show."

Say what? Why don't we ask the viewers?

Ipa, oh yeah

Ian Villasis competes for applause with Tom Gossage onstage as featured guests in Aliwan Fiesta '06 at the Aliwan Theater, Star City Complex, Pasay City on Thursday.

Guess who we're betting on?

Channeling Lennon

In Los Angeles, Reuters reports, a controversial television source riding today will claim it has reached the spirit of John Lennon, but viewers will have to pay $9.95 to find out what the peace-loving Beatle has to say.

The special, being carried on pay-TV service In Demand, was organized by the producers of a 2003 attempt to channel the late Princess Diana. Those shows failed to find Diana and received reviews that could have sunk the

AMALIA Fuentes

PAOLO Bediones

IYA Villania

Wild Bo

That's Bo Derek, not Blue, sorry girls. Agence France Presse reports that the lens-a-Lil actress has been appointed as special envoy of the Secretary of State for Wildlife Trafficking Issues.

Derek, best-known for her role in the 1979 feature film "10," appeared at a ceremony at the US State Department and said she was honored to accept such a "daunting" role and to do her part to help save the environment.

Titanic but it is estimated to have grossed close to $8 million.

RUSHES

ROUNDUP

Colin, Nicole settle

LOS ANGELES—HOLLYWOOD bad boy Colin Farrell and his ex-girlfriend Nicole reached a settlement in a bitter legal battle over a revenge sex tape they made together, one of the parties in the case said AFP Tuesday.

The battle began last year when Farrell sued to stop distribution of the tape, which he says was having sex with former Playboy Playmate Nicole Narain, whom he accused of attempting to peddle the tape to

COLIN Farrell

video distributors.

"All parties came to an amicable decision that everybody agreed upon, which I can't disclose yet," said Jed Gilman, chief executive of adult video distributor Internet Consumer Group, which was also sued by Farrell.

Celebrity sex tapes have become a hot commodity in Hollywood following the massive commercial success of those featuring Pamela Anderson and her then husband Tommy Lee, another starring actress Paris Hilton and a third featuring actor Tom Sizemore. AFP

THE STARS of "Desperate Housewives"

US District Judge Gilon Bolton dismissed the case last week. The reasons for his decision were penned in the court's website.

Joseph Barnes Jr. had claimed that he was forced into a white limousine on May 19, 1984, during the New Orleans World's Fair, and driven to California while being molested, held at gunpoint and cut with steel wire and razor blade. AP

Travolta, Mary team up

LOS ANGELES—JOHN TRAVOLTA AND Willem H. Macy team up with Tim Allen and Martin Lawrence in a comedy about middle-aged suburbanites who take to the road on motorcycles, the main publication Hollywood Reporter said Monday.

The upcoming film, titled "Wild Hogs," will be produced by Tollin/Robbins Productions and directed by Walt Becker for Touchstone Pictures.

The movie "revolves around a group of frustrated middle-age suburbanites who hit the open road in search of adventure, only to encounter a real Hells Angels group," the Reporter said. AFP

WILLEM H Macy

He wasn't there

NEW ORLEANS—A JUDGE HAS he found not a 22-year-old kidnapping and molestation claim against Michael Jackson because the pop star proved he was miles away from where the abduction allegedly occurred.

Free 'Housewives'

NEW YORK/ATLANTA—NBC Direct U.S. ABC television networks will allow some of its most popular shows, such as "Desperate Housewives" and "Lost," for free on the Web in a service supported by advertising, the company said.

US media companies have been experimenting with ways to deliver programs through new technologies while maintaining revenue as viewership for primetime television schedules slowly erodes.

But NBC's overture, which starts as a two-month trial in May, goes a step further, potentially bypassing cable operators by bringing top shows straight to the consumer, analysts said. Reuters

Disclaimer, please!

MEXICO—SPAIN'S conservative Roman Catholic group Opus Dei on Tuesday said it has written to Sony-Columbia to ask for a disclaimer in its film "The Da Vinci Code," arousing the world's fiction.

The film, to be premiered May 19 at the Cannes Film Festival, is based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Dan Brown which paints an unflattering portrait of the organization.

A spokesperson for the group told AFP Opus Dei had written to Sony-Columbia on April 6 saying it felt that a "Disclaimer at the start of the film clarifying it is a work of fiction and that any resemblance with reality is pure coincidence" would be "a mark of respect towards the Church." AFP

Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Mariano

Gov't urged to stop NFA subsidy scheme

World Bank also wants sale of power plants accelerated

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES MUST END THE NATIONAL FOOD Authority's costly subsidy program and immediately sell the power-generating assets of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) this year to further improve the government's financial position, a World Bank study urged.

The study also expressed concern about the slow pace of pension fund reforms, citing the Social Security System's fragile financial condition and the Government Service Insurance System's high operating expenses and limited investment options.

While focusing on the immediate impact of revenues on the national government deficit was crucial, the study said the government must also continue to attend to the performance of government-owned and -controlled corporations.

"The deficit of the NFA must also be diligently searched. In particular, government policy of buying high and selling low as a means of keeping staple prices low should be reconsidered," the study said.

"In a medium-term, such a policy is not sustainable and that the government must enhance agricultural efficiency to provide sustenance for its large growing population," it noted.

Improvement in the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD), which fell to 2 percent of gross domestic product in end-2005 from 4.6 percent a year ago, were primarily due to the performance of National Power Corp. following three successive rate increases, improved operating efficiency and the peso appreciation.

GOV'T, 8c

WHAT'S INSIDE

Manila de-mined, Lepanto discombobulated /11

Gov't expects interest savings on foreign loans /12

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BEDRIDDEN WITH BEDSORES?
FLYPAD
ENR EAST MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Digitel to spend $200M for expansion this year

By Dindo G. Lucas

LISTED TELECOMMUNICATIONS FIRM Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. will spend $200 million this year to expand the capacity and coverage of its cellular phone operations.

The money will be spent mainly to put up additional cell sites for its Sun Cellular brand which, to date, has the smallest network coverage among the country's major wireless networks.

The company is targeting completion of 3,000 cell sites by the end of year 2006 to support the projected surge of subscribers, Digitel said in documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission ahead of its annual meeting next month. "The expansion will enable the company to serve as many as 6 million subscribers."

The company is owned by tycoon John Gokongwei Jr., who also owns interests in food manufacturing, real estate, and airline ventures, among others.

Sun Cellular is the services entrant in the increasingly saturated local wireless market, and lists telecommunications giants Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc.

The company is hoping to boost its subscriber base by widening its fixed network coverage - a frequent dominant for prospective clients.

In its filing, Digitel said regulations that it was working to address concerns on limited coverage.

"The company is gradually building up its network base alongside the expansion of its network to be able to provide clients with better quality service," it said.

Digitel has so far tapped several "technical partners" to help its expansion plan move forward. These firms include Hewlett Packard and Logica CMG Worldwide, Siemenberg-Germa.

"Leading telecom network suppliers Alcatel (Lucent since), Ericsson (Nitaqua and Ericsson), Alcatel and Huawei (Starcomm) Capital Peoples (also) are responsible for the full-turnkey network infrastructure build out and capacity expansion of existing Sun Cellular sites nationwide," the company said.

In its filings with the SEC, the company also outlined its future exp ite call center industry as one of its major sources of revenue for this year.

"The growth of the Philippine economy is driven by the substantial jobs created by the call centers, business process outsourcing and shared services," it said. "These are anchored on the ever competitive Philippine telecommunications industry."

To capture a significant market share in this fierce competition, Digitel has engaged itself in the so-called mass on the go, ("Mango") wireless data, broadband, and centralized landline services.

The company is also pushing its wireless limited access services, especially for areas with limited or no access to cable facilities, mimicking a move pioneered by telecom giant PLDT.

Cautious trading seen

from page B1

tions from tensions over Iran, the world's fourth largest oil exporter," AB Capital Securities said in a report.

AB Capital Securities said that with the Philippines importing more than 90 percent of its oil requirements, economic growth might be " imperiled toward the second half."

The government has warned the public about higher crude and refined petroleum prices as oil companies have announced plans of successive increases of as much as 50 centavos a liter on fuel prices in the next several weeks.

"With the inevitable rise in prices, we won't be surprised with any upward adjustment in inflation targets for next year. The risks eventually have the flavour to impose to adopt a more restrictive interest rate policy in second half of the year," AB Capital Securities said.

Last week, the benchmark PSEi index gained 17 points or 39 points to close near seven-year highs at 2,203, its highest since May 28, 2001.

Blue chips Ayala Corp. and PLDT led the index's rise last week.

Climbing metal prices lessened the market, also adding to the upbeat sentiments was better-than-expected first-quarter budget deficit numbers, overcoming fears of higher business costs and adverse consumer spending from soaring crude prices, AB Capital Securities wrote. Elizabeth L. Antolan

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Manila de-mined, Lepanto discombobulated

MINDORO: MINE TYCOON FELIPE Yap has serious governance issues, if we go by the grumblings of his Mindoro partners in Lepanto Consolidated.

Having said that, we feel partly responsible for the outbursts of Natural Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes accusing Yap of market rigging leads for insider-trading plays on Manila Mining, the oldest mining company that Yap controls.

Cocktales was trying to pry some information from Yap after the shareholders' meeting of Lepanto Monday when, barking concern that majorities much younger than us were hovering to be background, we then led the mining (then) CEO to the press pack for their turn at the sidelongs.

Amid the usual badgering and hectoring from the business reporters, Yap, with equal good humor, then quite forthrightly disclosed that Manila Mining's papers had been forwarded to Reyes for approval since late last year, with the ministerial approval expected shortly.

Negotiations with prospective partners should advance as soon as the renewal of the exploration permit for Bulacnin is released by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources," was how Manila Mining's definitive information statement, released prior to the shareholders' meeting, put it.

Given the cheesy assessment and the

COCKTAILS

Victor C. Aguado

record-high premiums mutual funds, followers by the drones bought Manila Mining the following day, only to get slaughtered in the heavy selldown.

Disclosure: Stunned by the improving prospects of Lepanto, Cocktales was likewise lured by the long and joined the Yap bandwagon the day after, only to get caught in the slaughter.)

The Securities and Exchange Commission, whose chair has still to recover from jet lag, has yet to acknowledge if the market regulator would rear-view the Reyes challenge.

But even prior to last week's questioned transactions, the quarterly shareholders' lists of both Manila Mining and Lepanto since last year attest to no change in the shareholders' stakes of Yap and/or his P. Yap Securities in both listed companies.

Even the numbered accounts held by P. Yap Securities showed remarkable absence of movements, at least at every end of the quarterly reporting periods.

This is not to say that Yap is already in the clear.

According to a number of brokers, his brokerage firm was indeed heavily buying and selling both issues last week.

With the SEC now possibly on the trail, it is time for Yap to ask himself, given the low-cash, mediocre market, whether he wants to be a miner or stay on as a broker.

If he chooses to be the former, Yap should seriously start reining the earth, and stop obsessing about the stock market.

Thunderous opposition

BCDA Chair Filodelfo Rojas Jr. says it is up to Pagcor, not BCDA and certainly not him as ch

COCKTALES B4

Firms investing ₱1.4B in Subic

By Raissel W. Domingo

LOCAL AND FOREIGN INVESTORS are putting in about ₱1.4 billion or $28.2 million in various projects in the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

SBMA Chief Executive Armand C. Arreza said the agency would sign contracts with the locators on Wednesday for 12 projects that are expected to create about 1,700 new jobs.

The projects include those engaged in manpower recruitment, trading and shipping of minerals, plastic products, garments and construction supplies, manufacturing, hotel and restaurant operations, and research and development.

The companies involved include Asiapro Cooperative, Century Wide Corp., Coin Diamond Dubai Inc., Gigantic Noble Bay Inc., Interisland Pioneers and Services Inc., Inpromag Philippines Inc., Mango Valley Corp., Shenglan Corp., Subic Amino Highbrich Corp., Subic Shoreline Lolita Condominium Corp., Wincrest Subic Realtor Corp. and Yuanxin Metallic Bay Corp.

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Pilipinas Shell expects '06 profit to reach P5.7B

Firm faces contracting market, but remains confident it will match last year's numbers

By Abigail L. Hu

PILIPINAS SHELL PETROLEUM Corp. is looking to end the year with the same income it recorded last year, despite weakening demand for petroleum products brought about by rising prices.

Shell has just recorded an all-time net profit of P5.7 billion, 102 percent better than in P2,816.0M, its performance the year before, despite slower growth rates.

The country's second largest oil firm says there is room for cut, but is, however, as Shell country chair Edgar Chua admitted that industry demand has been contracting.

"Last year, the industry contracted 1.8 percent. The first quarter also looks like that," Chua said. "In 2004, we still posted a double growth, about 4.5 percent. This year, in the first quarter, however, demand has declined."

Demand, he said, should pick up as the country's economy grows.

High prices, however, would push people to further reduce their fuel consumption, effectively bringing down overall demand.

The Department of Energy is urging consumers to further reduce their oil consumption, in light of escalating world oil prices.

"While the economy has so far been resilient against oil price hikes due to the strong consumer forces provided by OFW remittances and the relative strength arising of the peso, we cannot be complacent about the need to further reduce our dependence on imported oil," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla had earlier said.

He said the country's lower overall oil demand last year proved that consumers could cut back on oil consumption when necessary.

Last year, consumption of petroleum products dropped 7.9 percent to 189 million barrels a day from 118.4 million barrels a day in 2004.

Lotilla attributed the demand reduction to the government's aggressive promotion of alternative fuels such as coco-biodiesel and ethanol, as well as the mandatory use of coco-biodiesel for government vehicles.

The government's energy conservation measures likewise brought down overall consumption, he said.

Despite a possible further demand contraction, Chua said Shell would still be expanding its operations this year, with plans to add between 30 and 35 service stations this year.

Each of these stations, he said, would cost an average of P30 million.

Seeing fuschia on the peso

No Free Lunch

Carlito S. Galvez Jr.

"PESO HELL'S TO LAUNCH'S ON of 05.17 to 61.7 streamed in [illegible] last Saturday.

In many row scrapins, this is either good news or bad news, depending on the vendee.

If you're an importer or worker in an exporting firm including a tourism facility, or an OFW or his/her family member, or simply have some dollars stashed away, you would probably be cheering.

But if you are an importer, have a foreign loan to pay, or were planning on a vacation abroad, you'd be unhappy.

If you are in economics talking a longer perspective and looking at the external outlook of the Philippine economy, you'd be more cautious and would probably reserve judgment until a longer term trend becomes apparent.

Fuschia book

A new kinda post on matters investing reading is one which like to take the longer term perspective on the exchange rate.

The thesis of the book is compelling: Our economy has performed the way it has (i.e. misaligned) over the past decades primarily because of mismanagement of our foreign exchange rate all through those years. What makes "The Peso Exchange Rate: Why It's So Peso?" unique is that a non-writers not by an academic economist but by a practicing one.

Ben Angeles, who studied economics in Boston and management at the Asian Institute of Management, writes on this burning issue not just on the basis of what's available and journals say, but more importantly, based on what he has learned directly as a successful entrepreneur who has felt and weathered the direct impacts of the peso movements over the years.

I can't tell whether his well-researched book will be read in spite of his not being among the familiar names in economics circles, or will in fact be read because of it.

I'll leave the book's credibility and author-kindness positively down from the fact that it was written by one with both the academic training and the hands-on experience to thoroughly understand what he is writing about.

In my case, the book's color (Angeles calls it his "Fuschia Book") is as provocative as the thesis it expounds, and will at the very least draw attention to the read of El-rode.

Tool, not thermometer

Angeles debunks the notion that the foreign exchange rate should be seen as a mere barometer that reflects the state of the economy. It should instead be seen as a tool for national economic development.

He asserts that the Philippine economy's structure has been severely deformed by the "mismanagement of the Peso's exchange rate since the end of the second World War.

Due part economic managers, and perhaps the Filipino public in general then ("our parents"), made the choice that they don't be understandable reasons, choices which essentially boiled down to making the peso more valuable than other currencies in the neighborhood.

Dirt-brighters' economists started out much weaker than ours in the parents' period (e.g. the Korean War at 1,500 to a dollar, Thai Baht at 23 a dollar) and purposely kept weak, which ultimately became the very reason why they are much stronger now.

Economic evolution

In other words, the evolution of our respective economies was determined rather crucially by how our authorities managed their respective exchange rates from early on.

As a quick schooner to the case by Feb06, I distinctly remember when the P55-$1 exchange rate was printed on the back of school notebooks along with the metric conversion tables and the multiplication table. That's how fixed it was. The 1986 EDSA Revolution ACI fixed it down open the read of 13 rode.

Our trade deficit successively widened in the ensuing years, but rather than devalue the peso, the government chose to compete valuable and import-friendly that set the future course of the Philippine economy to be marked through the decades, abetted by subsidies, monopolies and trade protection to favored-picked industries and companies.

It also provided the fertile ground for the dollar black market, smuggling, bribes, and general shadowy deals that has become deeply ingrained in Philippine business culture ever since.

It was not until the '80s when the FX exchange rate was finally abandoned by President Ferdinand Marcos and the peso devalued by close to 100 percent, to P21.961 to the dollar—at the insistence of the IMF—that controls and protection had been liquidated, and some normalization was accomplished.

Equalizer

The Philippines could have chosen a different course in the '50s, Angeles asserts, and brought us to a very different situation now. Devaluation then could have provided just-the-right-amount of the broad protection for domestic import-substituting industries without the need for import controls.

It would have also made smuggling costly and uneconomical, and provided just-the-right penetrating if from selling such a foothold in the local market.

In short, devaluation could have been the great equalizer, providing a level playing field for all industries—and their people—to compete in the economy based on viability and performance, with minimal government intervention and without the use of subsidies and monopolies.

The book makes a compelling case against having our young's currency, and does so in language that is more like coal than bauble (i.e. a lot easier to spell, if you remember what old King Tutankhamen's father's).

Google yourself a copy and see why last Saturday's news on the peso weren't such bad news—and was probably good news, in fact. Comments welcome at thales@pdinet.edu

Electricity market seen opening in June

THE PHILIPPINE WHOLESALE electricity spot market, which analysts see as the key to the successful unbundling of state-owned power plants, is likely to open in June, the operator of the trading system said on Friday.

Investors are skeptical whether Manila's plans to attract investment through a fixed-up power market will work, and to date, private investment has been mostly in Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)—where the companies have guaranteed returns.

Lene Christensen, president of the Philippine Electricity Market Corp., said he hoped regulators would finish their tips on the pricing mechanisms for the system of wholesale electricity spot market by (WESM) on May 15.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) must approve the fee that will be charged by WESM and the administered price in case cases where the market failed to operate due to natural causes such as typhoons, he said.

Analysts and officials have said the biggest stumbling block to the sale of dozens of power plants of state-owned National Power Corp. (Napocor) was the delay in the opening of the WESM.

They say investor interest has been dampened by a lack of supply contracts with distribution utilities, regulatory uncertainty on investment guidelines and rotting-over transmission constraints.

The Philippines failed to sell any power plants last year due to political instability and investor doubts about profitability in the deals' energy sector.

Manila had aimed to sell 70 percent of the total capacity of some 16 national power plants by the end of 2006.

The plants, with total capacity of 4,320 megawatts, account for about a third of total Philippine generating capacity.

Manila sold six power plants in 2004, or just 11 percent of the targeted generating capacity for sale.

It plans to sell 10 plants this year, with the first auction of a 600-MW plant on April 27, to refuse to serve as a sign of investor confidence in the economy.

Napocor aims to raise $4.8 billion from the sale of its plants and by [illegible] its electricity grid to the debts, which are equivalent to almost a third of the country's $59.6 billion debt.

Participants said the WESM, which will allow buyers and sellers to trade electricity round the clock by matching computer-based bids and offers, had been due to open in December 2005.

But this first decided to settle its proposed pricing formula with the ERC after the Supreme Court last year upheld a ruling by the Court of Appeals stopping Manila Electric Co. from buying power.

The Court of Appeals said energy regulators had acted without proper consultation in granting a rate hike to Meralco, the country's largest power distributor.

Christensen said the opening of the WESM would lead the way to the successful restructuring of the energy sector and the privatization of Napocor.

"There are no fast baby steps. This is a big change," Philippines said. "All of a sudden, you are going into a more competitive and transparent environment. That's exactly what we need."

Reuters

The Legend Palawan targets MICE market with new convention center

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Firms investing P1.4B

From page B1

arms of capital layout would be Yen, and's $1.6 billion (about P80 million) venture into the manufacturing, importation and export of semi-finished and finished garments.

Investment would be layering's $2.6 million (about P130 million) project to manufacture, fabricate, assemble and trade steel structures for another locator's facility that would rise at The Redondo Peninsula within the same economic zone.

Also, Artesia said SBMA hoped that more airlines operators would establish their bases in the freeport after the Airport Operators Council last week held its yearly meeting at the Subic International Airport's facilities.

Affiliated with the Montreal-based International Air Transport Association, the AOC groups 48 international airline operators doing business in the country.

In March, Artesia announced that SBMA was offering discounts rates on aeronautical fees of between 50 percent and 100 percent to airlines on select more airline operations.

The fees cover the landing and take-off, parking, lighting and other charges like those for the use of newly-added equipment and tools.

Artesia had said SBMA was looking into the possibility of [illegible] like incentive rates for "any point in Asia."

Current carriers using SBIA include Island Airlines, which offers charter flights to Manila and Tacloban; Mandarin Air with flights to and from Taiwan; Cebu Pacific with flights from Incheon in South Korea; Air Philippines with flights to and from Hong Kong.

Cocktales

From page B1

hopefully a promise from host, to raise the gaming fanfare in the town despite Thunderbird Casino in Port Point.

A Pagcor official, in the meantime, acknowledged that the local diocese of the Catholic Church is still opposed to the planned casino, which explains Thunderbird's seeming difficulty in securing the gaming license.

Thunderbird's second salvo in its pursuing Binangonan venture, the La Mesa casino and resort had been originally scheduled to open in time for last year's Christmas season.

Apparently, the fact that Thunderbird is being chaired by former Finance Secretary and ABS president Roberto de Ocampo still would not move the La Mesa bishop.

Money-go-round

▲ MORAN, the big banks, chronicle pays the least per check, PSBC to its board members for every board meeting. The board, it can, is reported to be considering to raise the per diem to [illegible].

▲ MANUEL V. PANGILINAN is sneaky a bull "billionaire, going by his PLDT shareholdings alone. The chair of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and owner of [illegible] by choice, which at Friday's record close of P2,800, is already worth more than P421 million.

▲ JP Cuisa is being decimated by Q2, part of the reason is that the Greenpeace group was also used how-to-go division is being headed by ex-Gen. Cuisa executive, Edwin Soriano. To further cut up into cut-throated detail, indeed, Q2 during the Holy Week launched a "squabbling" version of the popular game 8-Ball deals.

Heard through the grapevine

PORT Bonifacio Development Corp. plans to build a new road and link it to the Pinoy Nanol road in Dasmariñas Village to relieve the growing traffic bench at McKinley Road.

The infrastructure contractor of Ayalas are rumored to oppose the road link, while the studies are said to be at its out of the plan, now that they contend The Fort as well.

Email: cocktales_pdi@pdinet.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com

Gov't urged . . .

From page B1

But despite Napocor's good fiscal conditions, PNOC included, took over the power plants of Napocor, failed to change the required 70 percent of generating assets in 2005. Only 21 percent of those assets were sold last year.

Under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, PNOC should privatize 70 percent of its generating assets on or before it can declare spot-assets, which was originally targeted for July 2006.

"This setback is a cause for concern as it is mainly where high power rates and unreliable supply are considered major impediments to the country's climate conducive for growth. Efforts to bar resale on sale of generation assets based on lessons learned last year should be facilitated this year," the WB study said.

On privatization efforts, the WB study said the financial condition of the NPC, which was carrying private sector employees, remained "harsh."

"Despite improving actuarial balance, essentially planned and phased, in accordance to manageable rates and rationalization of benefit payouts, together with other parameters and structural changes, are needed to ensure NPC medium and long-term viability," the study said.

Among these reforms, the study said contingent liabilities arising from pension obligations may further undermine public finances in the future.

"On the other hand, the DBM needs to find alternative investment options to earn higher returns diversify its portfolio, and obtain better returns," the study said.

"In addition, GFIs needs to reduce operating and other expenses (which are more than three times those of GSIS), improve the collection of its loan portfolio and its management information system," it added.

The Philippines trimmed its public sector deficit to only P106 billion in end-2005 or P18.3 billion below the target due to the national government and major state-owned corporations like the Napocor.

Abaca rules hit

By Christine A. Saplican

LOCAL FURNITURE and handicraft industry may lose billions in the international market due to stricter regulations on the harvesting of abaca products.

Furniture and handicraft manufacturers claimed that shipments for export in the first quarter have been delayed as the harvesting of dried abaca leaf stocks—used primarily for designs—has been prohibited since March with the issuance of Executive Order No. 868.

Mona Lily, Philippines Inc. president Noel Cruzmon said in an interview that the dwindling supply of abaca raw materials has slowed down production and delivery shipments, specifically to Eliliat Stores in the United States.

Furniture and handicraft manufacturers contributed 20 percent or about $30 million to the $90 million export earnings generated from abaca-based products last year. DTI Bicol, the Department of Agriculture's Abaca Industry Development Authority (Fida) showed.

"We were surprised by the sudden effectivity of the EO 868 that still has no implementing rules and regulations," he said.

Mahintang insisted the EO on grounds that the "declaration" harvesting and cutting of abaca leaf stocks has contributed to the spreading of plant diseases.

Internet cafe rules up

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission will soon implement cyber-cop-up drive requiring all Internet cafe to register with the regulatory body every year to renew their business permits.

Raymund Rosales, president of the Philippine Internet Café Association, said registration should start by the third quarter of the year, with the implementation to be in effect to be ready for the 2007 business year.

The circular, although issued as early as two years ago, was not implemented as no Internet café seemed to register with the regulatory body.

Under the registration scheme, Internet cafés would have to conform to telecommunications-related services such as Internet access, online gaming, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP).

They need not register such services as Internet café phone, printing, typing and other non-telecommunications services, he added.

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Adventure GLS Sport Gas M/T	810,000	74,100	34,000	23,800	19,600	17,600
Adventure GLS Sport Gas A/T	851,000	77,450	34,757	24,557	20,357	18,357
Adventure GLS Sport Diesel	830,000	75,500	34,508	24,308	20,108	18,108
Adventure Super Sport Diesel 4x2	971,000	110,000	39,220	29,020	25,000	21,000

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Gokongwei firm readies 2 property ventures

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ROBINSONS LAND CORP., THE MALL and residential developer of the Gokongwei family, is launching two major residential projects within the next two years, targeting the Rosario Chinese-Filipino communities and overseas Filipino workers, general manager Dario Ignacio said in a briefing with reporters on Friday.

RLC is starting construction next year of 916 units, its second upscale townhouse cluster project on the Intramuros-Manila Bay property that the company recently acquired from the government.

916 units, which is on Otis Road beside Taft Avenue in Manila, will consist of 200 units spread across three hectares.

The units will feature three- and four-bedroom, three-story townhouses.

A three-bedroom unit is typically 138 square meters in size, and will be priced at P6.6 million. Four bedroom units are available in two sizes—156 square meters for P8 million and 188 square meters for P9.5 million.

Construction of the 916 units may start in the second quarter of next year. The turnover of units is targeted in late December next year until 2008.

RLC is also planning to put up a three- to four-story mall on the remaining one hectare lot of the old Manila Cue Inn. A mall owner will take up 10,000 square meters of mall space and may cater to 1,500 to 2,000 users. The mall is slated to be opened in 2007.

Another major residential project in the offing is Pavilion City Set to be launched by the third quarter this year, the project will offer two-bedroom homes at P2 million each and target families of overseas Filipino workers.

RLC is also in talks with a private owner of a lot in Pasay City to assemble a possible residential condominium.

URC allots P5.6B for expansion

UNIVERSAL ROBINA CORP. (URC) SAID IT was keeping its target of spending P5.6 billion this year to expand its branded food line, international product lines and sugar mill. URC president Lance Gokongwei said following the company's stockholders' meeting last week.

Gokongwei said that in line with its international expansion, URC would continue to expand its product lines in Thailand.

Locally, URC is targeting to raise sugar milling capacity to 5,000 tons of cane a day this year from 4,500 tons. It plans to further increase this capacity to 9,000 tons a day in 2007.

URC earlier said it was also allocating P2.17 billion out of its expenditure budget to expand its sugar milling and refinery through Southern Negros Development Corp.

Aside from the sugar mill, some P2.84 billion of URC's capital expenditure will be spent to expand its branded consumer food operations, specifically its beverage line, as well as grow its presence in international markets such as China, Taiwan countries.

In the beverage segment, Gokongwei said URC launched a low-sodium soft drink variant this year and is currently in the process of launching a low-sodium version of its C2 green tea brand. URC also launched Bull Fighter, a new energy drink, and Rush, a flavored drink.

Meanwhile, URC claimed that the Pasig City government's closure of URC's chocolate plant in Pasig City, was "unjustified and had no legal basis."

URC said it would meet with the Pasig City government to immediately lift its order. Roughly 900 workers of the plant will be affected by the plant's closure. URC claimed the plant has passed all air emission standards.

—Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Mining permit row derails investment deal

By Christine A. Bagbagan

INVESTORS HAVE BECOME HESITANT TO pursue possible joint-venture arrangements with Manila Mining Corp. after the government held approval of the mining firm's exploration permit, a company official said.

MMC chair Felipe Yap said in an interview that although those mining firms have significant interests in its copper-gold project in Rizal, gov. del Norte, they have remained non-committal due to the uncertainty surrounding the renewal of the firm's exploration permit, which is now awaiting approval of Natural Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Jardine Matheson Ltd., Anglo-American Plc. and East Asia Minerals Corp. are in discussions with MMC for a possible joint venture in the latter's Rizal province copper-gold property.

"They like mining. It isn't could not fully commit to the project without the EP (exploration permit)," Yap told reporters last week.

GEMS sources said that MMC was able to comply with the submission of pertinent documents, including the copies of Resolution No. 2006-022 of the Sangguniang Bayan of Placer, Surigao del Norte, favorably endorsing the renewal of MMC's EP-XIII-14, and the Memorandum of Agreement signed with the municipal government of Placer.

The MOA showed, among others, that recreational activities would be conducted by MMC outside the proposed mine waste in Barangay Antipuga and that MMC would not dump mine waste in barangay Alanibay and Boyungan if the mine tunnels are not backfilled by replenishing activities.

All these documents were given by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau to the Office of the DENR Secretary for final clearance and approval. Secretary Reyes said these were still being reviewed.

MMC, an affiliate of Lepanto Consolidated Corp., said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that the Canadian mining firm San Jose Minerals had already made a formal and competitive proposal.

Gov't expects interest savings on foreign loans

Continued peso strengthening to further bring down debt servicing requirement

By Michelle V. Rosario

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT STANDS TO save P15.8 billion in interest payments on loans this year and more than P1.98 billion in the succeeding years up to 2030 due to the strengthening of the peso, estimates from the budget department showed.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee, the interagency body tasked with setting the government's economic policies and targets, had set its budget programs for this year based on the assumption that the peso would settle at between 55 and 57 to $1.

To reflect the strengthening of the peso, the DBCC revised its foreign exchange assumption for 2006 to an average of between 51 and 53 to $1.

Since the government has already factored in a P53-57:$1 exchange rate in its proposed program for this year, the appreciation of the peso would mean the amount to be paid for maturing foreign obligations would be lower as result in opportunity savings.

Under the proposed 2006 national budget of about P1 trillion, more than 20 percent were earmarked for interest payments. This amount is lower by P5.8 billion than the original projection due to a stronger peso, currently at the 51-to-a-dollar level.

Using the assumption that the peso would continue strengthening to the median term or, at least, remain at its current level, estimates showed interest payments programmed for 2007 would go down by P5.9 billion. Interest payments are expected to further shrink by P29 billion in 2008, P33 billion in 2009, and P45 billion in 2010.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran earlier said that on a net basis, the strengthening of the peso was beneficial for the government as it helped improve the country's fiscal position.

Although a stronger peso means lower collection of import duties by the Bureau of Customs, the losses can be offset by the resulting decline in the foreign-debt servicing requirements, he explained.

The appreciation of the peso is welcomed by fiscal authorities because of its positive impact on the government's debt standing, but is being criticized by exporters whose incomes are adversely affected by this development.

Exporters have asked the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to intervene in the market and help temper the appreciation of the peso.

The central bank, however, was not to keen on intervening in the market as it preferred to let the exchange rate be determined largely by market forces. Instead, it offered to make available a loan facility for financially troubled exporters.

The central bank said it believed exporters would feel the pinch of the stronger peso only in the short term. It said the sector would be able to adjust soon and post robust growth.

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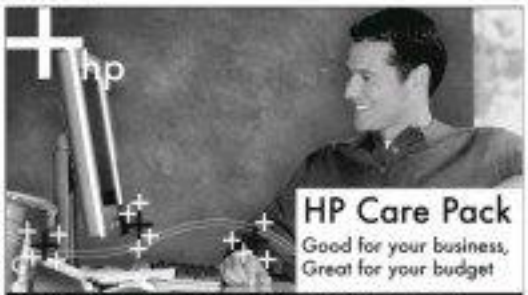

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Why your plane ticket may be overpriced

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorato C. General

AFTER 9-11, THE PREMIUM FOR TERRORism insurance, especially on airlines, soared in the skies. Based on studies of the factor by factoring in the premium as additional operating cost, the airline industry decided (and this seemed to be on a worldwide basis) to slap an "insurance surcharge" as a separate item in the ticket.

In 2002 when the practice started, the Civil Aeronautics Board sanctioned the airlines to apply a whole range of insurance surcharges. For example, a passenger on a domestic flight paid P600 in insurance surcharge. The CAB reviewed the surcharges every six months.

Since 2002, the surcharges have gone up. Today the P600 surcharge is only for flights in Luzon. The surcharge for Visayas (for beach island) is P420, and P600 for Mindanao.

For international flights, the passenger surcharge in 2002 was a mere $6. Today the surcharge for flights to US or Canada is $40. There is a range of surcharges for flights to other parts of the world.

Notably there is another range of surcharges on cargo shipped on international flights.

I see the basis of the insurance surcharge as a separate item in the ticket. This is called unbundling. You see this in your electricity and water bills.

But, the basis for the insurance surcharge was questioned here is questionable under our existing insurance and tax laws.

First, the surcharge is insurance premium, pure and simple. As such, the government agency that has the power to approve it is the Insurance Commission, not the Civil Aeronautics Board.

The question of tourists should have prompted the CAB to refer the airlines' request to apply the surcharge to the Insurance Commission, but the CAB just went ahead without even a by your leave. The people at the CAB are surely qualified to supervise the airlines. But insurance is more than supervision. It is also regulation. The Insurance Commission, unlike the CAB, is not only empowered to supervise the insurance industry but also to regulate it.

Regulation means that the Insurance Commission, unlike the CAB, would have asked the airlines to show that the surcharges were fair to the public and adequate to cover the risks. And, whenever the airlines wanted to raise the surcharges, they would have had to go through the wringer again in the Insurance Commission.

Second, the authority to the airlines to collect the premium violates the insurance code in another respect. Only duly licensed insurance companies, brokers and agents can collect premiums from the public.

Third, and this is the most crucial point to a consumerist, such as myself, the insurance surcharge is subject to claim taxes. 12 percent value-added, 12.5 percent documentary stamp, and one-half of 1 percent local government tax. Is the Bureau of Internal Revenue collecting these taxes from the airlines?

The taxes that Bill should collect are solely in service of. The taxable surcharges the airlines are collecting from the public run into tens of billions of pesos every year.

Collecting insurance surcharges may be a worldwide practice today. But, many parts of the world do not have the kind of insurance code we have, which are copied from American codes. Our tax laws also differ from those of the rest of the world.

In this matter of insurance surcharges on airline tickets, world-wide practice will just have to give way to Philippine laws.

LRTA posts profit, pays P23M in income taxes

THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AUthority (LRTA) last year reversed 23 straight years of losses, netting in a profit of P68 million.

In 2005 financial performance enabled LRTA to promptly pay the Bureau of Internal Revenue P23 million in income taxes.

Revenue Commissioner Jose C. Buenaventura and LRTA, under Administrator Mel Robles, was able to make its gross income rise without any hitch nor increase by commuters' fare and purchases, and having gains from fund and fare since to transport more passengers.

A stronger peso also helped the government corporation generate huge gains.

Buenaventura said LRTA's net payment of P23 million was a big improvement from the P2.5 million it paid in 2004.

Buenaventura would like to see more government corporations become profitable so they would help ease the budget deficit and generate the revenues the government needs.

"Strict monitoring of purchases and maintenance costs have significantly brought down LRTA's expenses, while improved efficiency of its operations raised passenger volume, resulting in higher passenger revenues," Robles said.

LRTA Line 1 (Baclaran to Monumento) surpassed its annual target of 74,280,309 passengers and had 76,806,417 passengers in 2005. LR-TA Line 2's (Santolan, Pasig to Recto) cargo ridership of 20,951,704 was exceeded to 30,234,802.

For the early part of this year, LRTA has already deployed 75 light rail vehicles compared to 62 trains when Robles took over in September 2004. Robles had decommissioned trains repaired and put back on track.

The improved efficiency enabled it to a new peak passenger record of 424,000 per day from the previous high of 328,000 before Robles took over.

Improved procurement procedures and operation costs allowed LRTA to drastically reduce its net losses from P1.463 billion in 2004 to P628.75 million in 2005.

"Enhancing the operational process by finding ways to maximize revenues while bringing down costs will enable GOCCs to earn and contribute more for share to the government," Robles said.

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DBP to offer $130M worth of hybrid notes

Ginebra to expand overseas markets

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL LIQUOR FIRM GINEBRA San Miguel Inc. is studying the possibility of expanding its export markets after the completion of its bottling and distillery plant in Thailand.

That was announced in San Miguel Capital Funding Ltd.'s preliminary offering circular on its hybrid securities offering. SMFD is a subsidiary of San Miguel Corp., which also owns 79.6 percent of Ginebra.

Ginebra through CSP Wine and Liquor Co. Ltd., a joint venture with Thai Life Group of Companies, is currently building a bottling and distillery plant in Thailand. The facility is expected to start commercial operations by mid-2007.

The joint venture was formed through Ginebra's acquisition of a 40-percent stake in CSP Wine and Liquor, a subsidiary of the Thai Life Group of Companies.

Ginebra at present exports to Thailand, Taiwan, Korea and the Middle East. In 2005, exports accounted for 5.7 percent of Ginebra's total hard liquor sales.

Ginebra wants to expand its overseas markets to include the United States, Mainland China and India.

Competition in the export markets is deemed intense with competitors including a number of international hard liquor producers. In the Philippines, Ginebra has one challenger and three production facilities in Cabuyao in Laguna, Sacsac Barbaza in Negros Occidental and Cebu.

Ginebra offers a range of hard liquor brands in the premium, popular and economy market segments. Its products include gin, brandy, Chinese value, rum, vodka, tequila and whisky.

Roadshows to be held in Singapore, HK and London

By Doris C. Dumlao

STATE-OWNED DEVELOPMENT BANK DBP of the Philippines will offer to the global market $130 million in perpetual bonds on May 10.

DBP set the schedule after obtaining the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' approval for the issuance of these hybrid notes.

The bank conduct roadshows for the float in Singapore, Hong Kong and London on the third week of May.

"That will be the bank building period and we hope to close it by Friday (May 19) of the same week," a DBP official said.

The bank will be DBP's first attempt to venture into the foreign capital markets. The DBP official said it was a good time to do so as the offshore markets are "very liquid."

The hybrid notes will be perpetual bonds with call option after 10 years.

A call option gives the issuer the right (but not the obligation) to retire the bonds within a specific period.

"If we don't call it after 10 years, it will be very expensive for us," the official explained.

The facilities's net yield for the perpetual bonds, which will be listed in Singapore, was forecasted at mid-9 percent, the official said.

The perpetual bond offering was being arranged by Barclays and Deutsche Bank.

These notes are eligible as Upper tier 1 or core capital. They have equity-like features that come in the form of unsecured subordinated debt or preferred shares with step-up features.

Under the BSP rules, hybrid tier 1 capital must be available to absorb losses of the bank on a going concern basis. This requirement sets it apart from other debt securities and gives this instrument equity-like characteristics.

After the offshore offering, the DBP plans to go back to the domestic market to raise PY10-billion of equivalent PY1.9-billion (or 2-capital-raising. The bank plans to issue the hybrid subordinated notes in three tranches later this year.

Those fund-raising activities are expected to improve DBP's capital adequacy ratio to 12.38 percent from 25 percent.

"We'll have a capital base that will enable us to devote our efforts to developmental lending. We hope that in the next five years, we won't have any more funding needs," DBP president Reynaldo David said.

FUND RAISING officers are expected to build the bank's capital base to a level that will enable it to focus more on developmental lending in the coming years.

ROUND-UP

Globelines' Postpaid Plus

GLOBELINES HAS PUT TOGETHER IT'S LANDline service and unlimited dial-up internet connection in one package for residential subscribers.

The Globelines Postpaid Plus gives subscribers a postpaid landline and unlimited dial-up internet for only P795.00/ month. The package will allow mobile subscribers to send Globelines or Globelines to Globelines toll-free SMS and receive free IOS tones when using the Globe+ card.

"We want to be able to provide for every subscriber's need at their locations, suited to whatever budget he may have. That is why we continue to come up with new services and offer new packages to consumers to make sure that Globelines has just the right service bundle for them," Globelines marketing head Jose Antonio T. Magsaysay said.

The new Globelines Postpaid Plus was launched in early April's rainy season to customers in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Existing Globelines Postpaid users can upgrade to the package.

"For P795 monthly it's less than what a subscriber normally pays for a telephone line and unlimited dial-up internet access. On top of making the best communication services available to subscribers, we also make sure that we bring them affordable rates," Magsaysay said.

He said this service was introduced for those requiring Internet access but with an eight-hour bill. Globelines Postpaid Plus is intended for customers who are heavy on calls and who need to connect to the Internet occasionally.

Globelines is a brand of Isonea Communications Inc. It introduced the first-ever NCD network in the country. It also provided broadband Internet connection at affordable rates.

Ayala Life profit up 77%

AYALA LIFE ASSURANCE INC. (ALI) (1 NO) posted a net income of P282.8 million in 2005, up 77 percent from P159.2 million in 2004.

Ayala Life president Cecilio de Guia Jr. said, "The increase is attributed to its growing bancassurance distribution channel and its solvent well-managed investment portfolio."

The first year premium income grew 16 percent mainly due to a 29 percent increase in the volume of its exclusive group and Group ERV's distribution network. Group insurance business increased 1 percent, from P 2.16 billion to P 3.01 billion.

Ayala Plans, Ayala's asset company of ISPI, posted its highest net income at P1.63-4 billion from previous year's P0.40 million.

CB Richard Ellis' purchase

CB RICHARD ELLIS GROUP INC. AND ALI-A Capital Partners (ACP) said CB Richard Ellis had acquired from ACP's investors and other shareholders a 14 percent interest in Ayala Land, one of Ayala's leading real estate services. Thus, CB Richard Ellis has committed to purchasing the remaining outstanding shares of Ayala Land, subject to certain conditions, at a later date.

Ayala Land has been CB Richard Ellis' affiliate in Manila since 1995, and the transaction reflects the company's strategy of buying multi-State firms that are leaders in their regional markets.

Ayala Land has long been a leader in the rapidly growing Philippine market, founded in 1994. The firm is based in central Makati and has 200 employees.

Ayala Land has completed sales and leasing transactions valued at $200 million in 2005. It manages more than 2.8 million square feet of commercial space.

Perks for cement projects unnecessary, says Cemap

By Ronnel W. Domingo

Consumers say high prices in domestic market do not reflect claimed excess industry capacity

INVESTMENT INCENTIVES FOR NEW cement projects are uncalled for as the industry's existing manufacturing capacity remains under utilized, a group of cement makers said.

Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (Cemap) said the industry's capacity utilization was placed at only 56.4 percent.

Cemap executive director Ernesto M. Ordoñez said in an interview that in 2005, the factories of all Cemap members produced 11.38 million metric tons of cement while their total capacity was 18.68 MMT.

Ordoñez said demand had been about 11 MMT in the past 10 years.

Cemap data showed that since 1995, cement output reached a high of 16.80 MMT in 1997 and slipped to the decade's lowest in 2000.

Also, demand last year plummeted with a 6-percent decline a three-year downtrend that started from a volume of 12.71 MMT in 2002.

"Demand has been generally flat in the past 10 years and it is illogical to expect this to switch is projection of 12-percent yearly growth based on a plan that is always being updated," Ordoñez said.

He was referring to government projections in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010, which showed that demand would overtake production capacity by 2010.

Government data show that excess capacity would steadily decline from 197 million bags or 7.88 MMT in 2005 to a deficit of 6 million bags or about 240,000 MT in 2010.

This projection had been the basis of government plans to again make available fiscal incentives for new cement manufacturing projects.

Cemap is against the idea as industry officials said this would only worsen the already low level of capacity utilization.

Cement buyers, including members of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association, blasted Cemap for manipulating the excess capacity issue.

Last month, Cebu said prices of cement almost high levels of excess capacity did not jibe with record-high cement prices.

Cebu had urged the government to push through with plans to encourage new players with investment incentives.

Last week, Cemap had called for additional protection of the cement industry by including cement in the list of sensitive products that would be spared from reduction of import barriers under the World Trade Organization.

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DTI, traders urged to put up export fund

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SHOOD MOVING NO FILIPINAS seems the Department of Trade and Industry and the export sector to chair in the sort of creating a 'new fund' that will boost the competitive edge of the country's exports.

But the proposed exporters fund—which according to Undersecretary Manuel Sarmiento Jr. would be "a multi-billion peso fund"—would not anywhere from P500 million to P600 million—but just the BSP is a dilemma. Some members of the BSP's Monetary Board do not relish the thought of extending 5 annual subsequences.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the institution was open to the creation of a new export promotion fund, and that one way to go about it was to establish a non-dilutive scheme among the DTI, DTI and exporters.

"It's better if the private sector has a stake's bottom to the fund," Tetangco said.

The BSP earlier extended a P10.3 million fund for the same objective, but the export sector complained the amount was too small and the eligibility criteria too restrictive.

"What's being contemplated is a bigger export promotion fund where the DTI and the BSP may put up their respective shares," BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said.

But BSP sources said at least three members of the Monetary Board did not favor the budgeting of a bigger amount for export promotion, saying it was not the monetary regulator's job to intervene in industrial matters.

In fact, some MB members were taken aback when Nesi urged Tetangco to commit to an export promotion fund worth up to P500 million during a forum with exporters last week.

"It's not our mandate to promote exports," one MB member said. "Giving out loads of cash to sector-specific industries was among the reasons why the old Central Bank went bankrupt."

But Guinigundo said that if the BSP were to push through with its contribution to the export fund, it would still be within its mandate.

"We're not subsidizing (the sector), we're just helping stabilize [export inflows]," Guinigundo said. "When you stabilize export earnings, you are also promoting monetary and financial stability, which is the function of the BSP. This is still broadly consistent with the mandate of the BSP."

During a forum last week, representatives from small and medium exporters warned that unless the peso falls back to the 53:01 level, many businesses would be forced to fold up, while others may start laying off workers.

Subic imposes $100 fee on import permits for used vehicles

By Bernard W. Dominguez

SUBIC EXPORT AUTHORITIES IOMS slapped a $100 fee on import permits for used vehicles since they resumed issuing clearances last October.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority had stopped the processing of applications for import permits from June 2004 until October 2005 as industry stakeholders awaited the ruling of the Supreme Court on whether the importation of vehicles through Subic was lawful.

Car importers have been complaining that the costs of used vehicles just the country through Subic has stunted the growth of the local industry.

Arnould C. Arroza, SBMA Administrator and Chief Executive, said the agency generated about P11 million in revenues from the import fees in the fourth quarter of 2005.

This comes that permits for a total of 2,200 units—including heavy equipments...were issued out of the available permits for 10,000 units as of October last year.

"The SBMA took measures to issue a number of permits based on the 'importers' available yard space," Arroza said. "Before that, importers have been issued more than what their yards could accommodate and what actually happened was that the permits were 'sold' for a secondary market."

The local assemblers' concern about used vehicle importation stemmed from the influx of cheap second-hand units through Subic.

As a result, critics have questioned in court the act of importation itself, saying even this should not be allowed as it was tantamount to smuggling.

Government officials said the intent of the law that allows used vehicles in Subic was that these would be processed for export.

When the SBMA resumed processing permits last year, officials said there were at least some 600 applications pending.

SBMA records show that between 2001 and 2005, at least 90,000 cars, construction vehicles and heavy equipment have been brought into the Freeport.

Last month, allied groups, which include the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers Association of the Philippines Inc., said industry players were hopeful that a Supreme Court ruling would finally put the issue to rest.

Petron defines need for oil tariff differential

By Abigail L. Ho

IN ENSURING THE oil refinery industry, the government will have to implement a tariff differential between crude and refined petroleum products, according to Petron Corp. president and chief executive Khalid Al-Fuddagh.

"We doubt a tariff differential will spur new investments," Al-Fuddagh said on the City. "Since the abolition of the tariff differential, while the Philippines is short of refining capability, nobody now has come in with new investments in the refining business.

"The region is booming in terms of putting refining capacity, so why isn't that happening here?"

Big help

Before refiner Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. last year submitted a position paper on the importance of fuel on the tariff differential issue.

Edgar Chan, Shell country chair, earlier said that a drop differential would be a big help from the government.

Al-Fuddagh said that while a tariff differential would benefit refiners such as Petron, maintaining the status quo or having refiners and gain importers pay the same import duties, would not stop them from upgrading and expanding its refinery facilities.

Different

This would be because Petron had a different business model from Shell, Al-Fuddagh said.

He explained that Shell, being a multinational company and having regional operations, would have to consider the other countries where its parent firm has a presence.

"Obviously, Shell's would put their resources in the most efficient country, in terms of the region or Eastern hemisphere," Al-Fuddagh said. "So they're looking at whether or not the Philippines can compete globally with the other refineries' assets that they have."

Decision

"So why would they put it some where that doesn't give them incentives, when other countries are giving them those incentives?" Al-Fuddagh asked. "I think that's really [why] they took it."

In Petron's case, he said its Philippine refinery was the only one it had, as all investment decisions would be made based on what would make the company more viable and able to produce higher-margin products.

Should Shell decide to close its refinery down, however, he said it would be impossible for Petron to address the entire local fuel demand.

If that happens, he said Petron "could not fill the [gap]."

"It's just a matter of timing and defining the stability of the market, since putting in new capacity needs a significant amount of money," Al-Fuddagh said.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
TONDO MEDICAL CENTER
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
TONDO MEDICAL CENTER
TMC-BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

CEBU HOLDINGS INC.

NOTICE OF REGULAR ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the regular annual stockholders' meeting of **CEBU HOLDINGS, INC.** will be held at the City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City on **FRIDAY, 28 APRIL 2006 at 10:00 A.M.** with the following:

AGENDA

1. Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Annual Report of Officers
4. New Business

4.1 Ratification of all Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors and Management adopted in the ordinary course of business during the preceding year.

5. Election of Directors (including the Independent Directors)
6. Election of Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of **17 March 2006** shall be the stockholders entitled to vote at this meeting. As per By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Books of the Corporation will be closed from **17 to 24 March 2006**, inclusive.

Makati City, 02 March 2006.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RENATO D. BARZAN
Corporate Secretary

NOTICE OF REGULAR ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the regular annual stockholders' meeting of **CEBU PROPERTY VENTURES AND DEVELOPMENT CORP.** will be held at the City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City on FRIDAY, 28 APRIL 2006 at 3:30 PM, with the following:

AGENDA

1. Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Annual Report of Officers
4. New Business

4.1 Ratification of all Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors and Management adopted in the ordinary course of business during the preceding year.

5. Election of Directors (including the Independent Directors)
6. Election of Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of **31 March 2006** shall be the stockholders entitled to vote at this meeting. As per By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Books of the Corporation will be closed from **31 to 28 March 2006**, inclusive.

Makati City, 06 March 2006.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RENATO D. BARZAN
Corporate Secretary

INFOTECH
Text as your feedback to inquirer is averaging/is managed at 2007 (times) or 488 (hours)

E-mail: pc_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Lee Magno

Intel slowly building digital home networks

(Last of two parts)

THE HOMEPLUG POWERLINE ALLIANCE, founded in March 2000, is backed by industry giants such as Intel, Sony, Samsung, Motorola and GE. A standard for distributing data across electrical wiring is now being developed. Others have successfully used the powerline in years past, but proprietary protocols were used so appliances and devices could not effectively communicate using the earlier methods.

This development becomes significant as the lines between the computing, communications and entertainment markets continues to blur. HomePlug is now nearing the end of the specification process. Today, HomePlug networking is the only globally recognized standard for high-speed powerline networking with millions of products in use or in production.

This is where VoIP comes in. As Intel pushes its digital home entertainment platform, it hopes to get more OEMs to manufacture products according to the VoIP specification. And with HomePlug, these VoIP-enabled appliances could easily be connected through the electrical wiring network.

The entry of Intel into the consumer electronics market will surely be watched by companies like Sony and Samsung, which are already in a very competitive struggle for market dominance. Intel tried with its eyes trained on the same market which is increasingly becoming crowded. What happens there when TV manufacturers begin shipping products with VoIP-like capabilities?

"Then I would be very happy," said McDonald. "VoIP is based on open standards and we would encourage consumer electronics suppliers to consider this plan for us and incorporate VoIP into their products."

USING the electrical wiring in homes, HomePlug adapters plugged into electrical outlets become broadband access points.

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Even when business is flourishing, don't let opportunities pass you by. But with a PC based on Intel® Pentium® D, promises, your business can be more responsive. Because it gives you the potential to access your customers, partners and prospects immediately through e-mail, instant messaging and over the Internet, allowing you to seize every opportunity the moment it arises. And see how Intel's outstanding with software and hardware suppliers results in quality solutions for your business. And how our network of over 100,000 resellers and PC manufacturers can help provide service and support for small businesses. Visit www.intel.com/pcs/buttonweb

intel Pentium D inside

intel

SMBs GUIDE TO BUYING PCS

Whether buying your first PC or creating coursework, your computer should be tailored to your company's needs. Below are the top 10 things to consider when purchasing PCs.

1. Why do you need this computer?
Knowing how the PC will be used is a good way to determine the right PC for your business.

2. Beware of refurbished computers.
Although upgrading computers is certainly your company's life may significantly cost less than a newly made computer, it can be less reliable and may cost more in the long run.

3. Laptop or Desktop?
If your employees constantly need access to company data on the go, laptops are the best solution. With wireless technology like Intel® Centrino® Mobile Technology, your employees can connect to the Internet to more information anywhere and easily.

4. Software — where to start?
Windows®, Macintosh OS®, and Linux® all have their benefits. You can also run collaborative tools, and what you need to accomplish your most important tasks.

5. Extras?
If you plan on running professional programs or have some very specialized tasks, you may want to add extra components to your computer, such as a video card with graphics acceleration, digital cameras, web cams, etc.

6. How I Skimp on Security?
You cannot afford to risk your business's data. Make sure your computer is powerful enough to run anti-virus software which are disrupting other programs.

7. Memory
For basic applications, you should have at least 256 Megabytes (MB) of RAM. Ideally, you should have a minimum of 512MB for graphics programs. Basic word processing requires a hard drive that is 40Megabytes (MB) but if you are dealing with a lot of images, music, or other large files, you should go up to at least 80GB.

8. Power
Again, consider how the computer will be used. If you often run computer intensive programs or do a lot of multitasking, then invest in the latest Pentium® D processor supporting Hyper-Threading Technology for desktop PCs. Meanwhile, the Intel® Centrino® Duo is the best bet for notebooks.

9. Cheaper isn't always better
Your computer is an investment that should provide three years of optimal performance for a desktop PC, and two years for notebooks. It should also provide headroom and flexibility, for new software or more demanding image-intensive applications. PC should be a long-term relationship, so select a company and brand you can trust.

10. How I be dazzled by sales lingo
Knowledge is the essential PC tactic will help you navigate through a sales pitch. Get to know what you need in a PC before going to the store and buying one.

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BUSINESS

High spending draws investors' concerns

Gov't policy to settle debts in Q1 threatens to breach budget deficit target for '06

By Michelle F. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF spending the bulk of its programmed expenditure for 2006 in the earlier months of the year has drawn the concern of investors and analysts, who said that the fiscal strategy threatens to breach the budget-deficit target for the full year.

Investment banks pared close to 200 basis points off their 2006 full-year deficit target as early as July. The government then had a hard time restricting spending in the latter months of the year, according to a ranking finance official.

The official said that the Department of Finance has already received queries from several investors on whether the government's policy was prudent.

Earlier, the administration's economic managers saw the need to pump prime the economy. They said that the fiscal program for 2006 was designed in such a way that most of the spending, especially for infrastructure, would be done in the first half of the year, to coincide with the dry season.

They likewise agreed the spending limits entailing this year should be maximized.

Under the fiscal program for 2006, the government is allowed to post a budget deficit of P71.6 billion in the first quarter alone, P10.5 billion in the second, P31.6 billion in the third and only P19 billion in the fourth to stay within the P120 billion deficit ceiling set for the full year.

In the first quarter, the government's budget deficit actually hit P67.8 billion, amounting for 34 percent of the deficit program for the whole of 2006.

The first-quarter deficit was, however, still lower than the P71.8-billion programmed deficit for the period.

The new fiscal policy breed some lawyers to question whether the government could keep to its 2006 target without going over the P125-billion budget deficit ceiling, the official said.

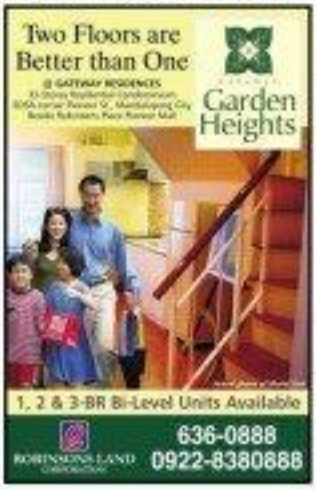
But National Treasurer Omar Cruz has shrugged off concerns that the new fiscal policy threatens the government's fiscal goals.

Cruz said the government is mainly committed to meeting the target of reducing the deficit to P125 billion this year, and reducing it over the 2006. But he stressed that this would be accomplished not through tight spending but through increasing revenue collection.

The government's intention to maximize and front-load spending this year is a turnaround from the belt-tightening policy of last year, when the government hit a budget deficit much lower than programmed, mainly through expenditure cuts.

While the government set a deficit ceiling of P100 billion for last year, it recorded a budget gap of only P146.9 billion at the end of 2005—P53.1 billion lower than programmed.

Following last year's cautious spending and the increase in revenue collection, the government has decided to put a premium on pump-priming the economy this year, Cruz said.



Gov't agency regulates use of high-tech radio tags

By Dakoy L. Lucas

RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION (RFID) tags may soon gain wider acceptance among businesses in the country after telecommunications regulators circulated draft rules governing their use last week.

Under the proposed guidelines, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) assigned three frequency bands within which RFID tags and readers may be used, helping set aside to a technology that is already being used locally but is, for the unregulated.

According to the NTC, RFID systems are "intended to carry data in suitable transponders, generally known as tags, and to retrieve data, by hand or automatic-readable means, at a suitable time and place to satisfy particular application needs."

Data within a tag may provide identification of an item in manufacture, goods in transit, location, the identity of persons or vehicles, belongings, a vehicle or assets, an animal, or other types of information, the proposed circular explained.

RFID systems employ tiny chips and wireless antennas that can be embedded into products and used for unique identification purposes.

Popular RFID devices currently being used locally are radio tags and barcodes used to control shoplifting, as well as so-called e-Pass devices attached to cars that use the South Super Highway toll system.

BUSINESS Monday

Business/Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

Giving credit where credit is due

Lack of skills, know-how, location, hinder entrepreneurship in rural areas

By Salvador I. Sibayan
Coordinator, CP Institute
for Small-Scale Industries

RICE, CORN, COCONUTS and many other crops grow in the agrarian reform communities (ARCs). In the presence of sun, soil and water, everything grows except, alas, entrepreneurship.

There are several reasons entrepreneurial seeds remain dormant in many rural areas.

The people there lack the business skills to expand their operations. They lack basic knowledge in marketing. Worse, they live in remote, far-flung areas.

Rather than treating them as customers, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), through the Philippine-Australia Technical Support for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (PASAR-RD) Program, looked at them as problems that could be overcome.

To break the problem of decreasing the DAR project team introduced microfinance services to the ARC residents and local government officials.

The area

One such place was Barangay Sobaco in Aklan. There were few manmade opportunities in the area. Only 50 of the 173 households in the barangay were found to be engaged in non-farm enterprises. They were in trading, mostly servicing stores, food processing, bakery and crafts, and services. Whatever the nature of the enterprise, expansion was hampered by the lack of capital and entrepreneurial skills of prospective borrowers.

Accessing credit continued to be a limiting factor. The existing cooperative in the area, with its meager capital build-up resource, could hardly meet the credit requirements of its members. Other than the cooperative, there were no formal financing institutions in the area.

Residents confirmed that lack of capital prevented them from following proper fertilizer applications, pest control measures, and other prescribed farm management practices. They were dependent on the landowners and lenders to finance their production expenses. In return, the farmers had to repay what they had borrowed in kind.

With the prevailing practice of the landowners getting two-thirds of the net produce, the farmers were left with very little and usually ended up being indebted to the landowners and the informal moneylenders.

Prior to the introduction of microcredit, the barangay had seven availed of any form of credit assistance either from the LBP, the national government or formal financing institutions for farm and non-farm activities.

Typically, micro-credit requires no collateral, focuses on business, not personal or family needs, involves an initial loan of P5,000 to P15,000 on the average which can progressively increase depending on repayment performance on the previous loan, is usually paid in weekly installments, and requires community backup.

To sell the idea of micro-credit, the necessary groundwork had to be done. This involved Tuloy sa Kaunlaran Inc. (TSKI) a microfinance institution, and DAR-PASPARRD jointly formulating an action plan. This was followed by TSKI ordering those who were pre-selected by the DAR-PASPARRD to undertake.

HOW MANY enterprises in the province are usually trading, service? stores, food processing, business and credit, and services

A month later, TSKI followed this up with 36 hours of accreditation training spread over eight days. At the end, TSKI asked the participants to take a group evaluation test to determine their eligibility to avail of credit.

The loans

An initial loan of P50,000 was released to 35 qualified borrowers, mostly for sari-sari stores, food vending, or rice vending. By the end of 2004, TSKI encouraged to collect all the amounts due for a 100-percent repayment rate.

This was followed by another loan that was almost double the first. This time, the loans were for multiple purposes, i.e. working capital for sari-sari store plus livestock or poultry raising—or food vending with livestock raising. Again, the amount was fully paid with a 100-percent repayment rate.

The loan applications for the third cycle are in progress. The number of qualified borrowers has increased to 26. The loans approved by release have reached a total of P350,000, but may reach a total of P400,000, with most of the borrowers from the second cycle availing of individual loans ranging from P8,000 to P15,000.

How much did effort cost?

For TSKI, operating costs to service the credit program consist of administrative and organizing costs. These are estimated at 5 percent of the loan plus a service charge of P520 for each borrower, each time one applies for a loan. The operating costs are used to cover the expenses of one TSKI officer who makes 24 weekly visits to the area from the time the loans are released until these are fully paid.

For the DAR, operating costs consist of organizing (P200 per borrower), which is incurred during the conduct of microfinance orientation, and the introduction of alternative income opportunities at the rate of P1,00 per borrower. Although the DAR does not expect to recover this, spending the amount enabled the seemingly "unbankable" to borrow.

As for the borrowers, they are charged 16 percent per annum on what they borrow. Along with their weekly loan payments, they have to save at the rate of P40 a week. This is deposited in their interest bearing accounts. Aside from the service charge of P520, they contribute a nominal amount of P10 to P50 to a running fund.

Increase in income

According to most borrowers, access to credit was a factor in improving their

(CONCLUDED)

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Microsoft

Homegrown mobile messaging provider gets global certification

BYRAND CHIBA IS THE first CMMI Level 5 organization in mobile messaging space.

Chiba, a San Jose, ... creators of the popular Internet-to-mobile text messaging application Chiba Messenger, announced that it has received Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) Level 5 certification from Carnegie Mellon's Software Engineering Institute (SEI).

Maturity Level 5 is the highest standard of quality in the information technology industry.

CMMI is for internationally recognized quality certification that organizations such as Intel and Nasa compare their own processes to. This model was born in the federally funded Software Engineering Institute (SEI) established at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Chiba Asia's assessment for CMMI Level 5 was conducted by SEI-certified SCC International, who also confirmed that Chiba is the first application developer in the mobile messaging applications development space worldwide to get the CMMI Level 5 certification.

"The Level 5 certification is more than anything else an assurance for ourselves, that we are able to sustain both the fantastic pace of our product innovation and our rapid expansion. While products like Chiba Messenger are renowned in terms of their utility, they are constantly adapted to different market conditions," said Gene Buenaventa, Chiba chief operating officer.

The company reported up to unsolicited letters beginning 2004 and said has products live via the networks of telecommunications companies in the UK, Ghana, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore. Several Latin American carriers are also now testing commercial services in Chiba.

Currently present in 11 countries with services live over 30 international telecoms, Chiba is the Philippines' leading "exporter" of mobile messaging-based applications.

The company's flagship service Chiba Messenger has close to 20 million users.

The first obligation of corporate social responsibility

SO, SELF-RESPECTING CEO SUNDAYS will publicly proclaim that he is in business primarily for profit. But, among other reasons, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become more than a buzzword. It is a salary in business circles, even as a campaign goes on to expand the effort to bring other business groups in the fold, including small and medium-scale enterprises.

Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) has more than 200 corporate members. The Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development (BBC) now has more than 200 individual members. The League of Corporate Foundations (LCF) has a roster of more than 60 corporate foundations and it continues to recruit.

Gawad Kalinga (GK) is actively supported by 300 major corporations and the number is rising. Meanwhile, the CSR committee of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) is busy at work on its 10-year program.

Economic and Social Convergence: CSR means many things to many people. It is widely practiced on many levels—giving and doing—but like in most exciting undertakings, it is important to go hand in hand.

The word corporate makes the concept by practice definitions a business or economic activity. By the same token, it is also by practical definition a social activity.

In other words, there is a close economic and social activity convergence, and it is crucial for us business people to understand the limits of this convergence.

The Role of Profit: It would be helpful from the start to dispose of one issue. Profit is an essential component of business. Without profit, ... sustainable long-term productivity, there is no business and, consequently, no way on which to hang corporate social responsibility.

The Purpose of Business: Profit-making is also the end or culminating point, although it is a strategic business objective. It is not the purpose of business. Business has a salient purpose. Quite instrumentally in most cases, big executives actually "live and live" that noble purpose of business every day.

It is not profit that makes them go to work, but the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at the end of each day.

This "sense" addresses the very basis need of their human nature, which is the subject of human development. In other words, the more they work, the more satisfied and accomplished they feel, the more human they become.

All the people who work with my movie firm, from middle managers all the way down to the production line, sales team, etc., have the same very basic need to be satisfied and accomplished and to become more human, although obviously in different ways and different degrees.

The business is a community of persons organized to achieve a common goal. must provide the opportunities and environments for everyone in the firm to fulfill his very basic human needs, each according to his ability to contribute.

A Management Challenge. It is a full virtue-and-goodness list of executive smarts: it is a management challenge, not a labor productivity issue. Few would have trouble accepting the notion that, in addition to making a profit, business must render important service in society.

That conventionally takes care of the most important stakeholders, usually the stockholders and the customers and, in this age of corporate social responsibility that includes the community and, of course, the poor wherever they may be.

But how about the workers in the firm? Typically they are praised and their value recalled in the last paragraph of the corporate annual report.

The first obligation of corporate social responsibility is to the employees in the firm, from the top to the very bottom.

Thus, the right formula in Marx then just as economic activity, because it is a social relation whose fundamental purpose is to fulfill the basic human needs of the people working in it and to advance the well-being of society at large through the resulting pursuit of its profitability.

A business must look inward before it looks outward.

As articulated in "Profit and More," an article in the Journal of Business Ethics, the generation of work for people is not just a by-product of the logistical needs of the business, but actually a key reason why the business exists in the first place.

Because labor is not solely meant to serve an economic purpose—it is not just one of the many commodities that generate cost and can be subject to routine reduction of labor among diverse and unstructured materials.

It has primacy over inanimate instrumental functions. Technology is for the service of man and is not meant to replace him.

Enlightened companies ensure conditions in the organization that foster growth and their well-being of employees with such initiatives as designing and redefining jobs and work flow; promoting participative management and actually sharing ownership of the firm; making sure that which herself is unavoidable, displaced workers are justly compensated and relocated; developing family friendly policies, paying just wages and fringe benefits and respecting the rights of unions to organize, etc.

Importance of Public Awareness: In spite of the problems, the problem is not the progress we are given greater attention, but rather, it is presumed that they are. Therefore, to be socially responsible, the firm does devote its energy and public relations to ensure favorable images.

Furthermore, because of the existence of skilled labor unions who are in touch and heard as some executives are as in their economic and social responsibility, progressive developed against the attitudes of labor unions among both lamb servants and industries in this sense, because opposed public awareness, as in truth in advertising, make people honest and outspoken—in itself perhaps also a major first step toward developing genuine cooperation with the labor sector.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. Feedback at majoricg@hotmail.com.ph)

Giving credit ...

Point page B4

families' cash flows. Around a third of the increase in household income was attributed to better business operations. Now they have more food on the table and have more money to send their kids to school.

They also benefit from numerous insurance which provides social benefits to them and their immediate family members up to P20,000. For the original borrowers, their loyal savings amounted to almost P31,700 after the second loan cycle. This is only about P2,000 per individual, but then they had no savings to speak of a year ago.

As entrepreneurship takes root in their midst, Ms. Bernardino Parada of NEDO, ICI couldn't help but notice that the borrowers were slowly economic. out to prove that they could save and pay the true cost of credit without any special consideration.

MAPping THE FUTURE

Vicente T. Villegas

'Do something great'

MANUEL V. Pangilinan

Excerpts from a speech delivered by PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan before the graduating class of the Ateneo de Manila University School of Management and School of Government and Engineering.)

FIRST PART OF THE JOURney—a mindset

The first part of my journey began with my family. My first mindset on a public school teacher in Pangasinan and Tarlac, living through the ranks to become superintendent of public schools, eventually secretary of education. My dad began his career as a messenger at the Philippine National Bank, and retired as president of Traders Royal Bank, one of the larger banks in the '80s.

During my elementary years, I had 13 centavos to buy a bottle of coke, five centavos for crackers, another 12 centavos to take the bus home from San Beda in Mendiola—which I think now I wouldn't have, otherwise I would have walked home. In college, my world's allowance at the Ateneo was P10, and that included my expense here.

I had a lot of classmates with cars, some with drivers. They were lucky that I told myself that some day I will be like them. My scholarships in San Beda and Ateneo were my only fortunes.

In late 1960, as my own graduation was approaching, I had come home from the Ateneo one Saturday afternoon, and spoke with my dad about taking an MBA in the states. I was not rich at least—which meant there wasn't enough money for an education abroad and I had to find a way myself. Fortunately, Procter & Gamble was offering a new scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. It was a national competition. I entered—and won.

Second part of the journey—a professional manager

After two years in Philadelphia, I returned home hopeful about landing a management position at a large company. I made out at Bristol Myers—P&G—turned down my application. So I ended up taking the first job I was offered—as executive assistant to the president at Filoil marketing for P1,000 a month.

Without any job experience, no one's for choosers. Grab the first decent job that comes your way, immerse yourself in work and soon, you'll find the right job, or it will find you.

After six years with Filoma, I decided to work abroad. I needed to find myself, to prove that I can stand on my own and succeed.

I was recruited by Bateman International, a Philippine investment bank based in Hong Kong. I learned the dynamics of international finance—my Chinese colleagues—not from the Filipino executives.

Thereafter, I was recruited by a joint venture investment bank with American Express.

I had expected to be appointed CEO of that new bank, but wasn't. While disappointed and even depressed, I soldiered on. My former boss called inside of two years.

A huge dilemma confronted a young man of 36 years—return to Manila or stay with Ayala? I decided to remain a soldier of fortune in Hong Kong. I wanted to prove something to myself. I felt I had to prove to Ayalans that the Filipino can. After four years with Ayala, I received a phone call from my boss in London. He said, "You're outgrown Hong Kong and are now ready for London to be CEO of Bateman Europe."

After reflection, I politely said, no. I felt Asia is my home.

Third part—an entrepreneur and corporate activist

The third, and final part, starts with First Pacific.

While working in the region, I met some clients—Benjamin Ismaling Antoni Ayala—who were willing to support my idea of a regional banking and trading business. With their help, I founded First Pacific in Hong Kong in 1981. I started out with only 60 people, on 50 square meters of office space, and little capital. Now, the companies that comprise First Pacific have sales of $5 billion, with more than 60,000 employees across the region.

But I won't tell you about our successes at First Pacific. Instead, I'll describe our failures—some of which indeed became total failures, but some of which we turned around and made a success.

In 1989, we were negotiating to acquire Hutchison, maker of Sunlight—a low-end consumer brand in Sydney, Australia. I took the overnight flight to Sydney from Hong Kong, confident that when I arrived the following morning, a letter from an international bank approving our financing would await me. But lo and behold, it was a letter of disapproval.

So there I was in Sydney, committed to purchase Sunlight, but without enough money to complete it. Providentially there was a competing bidder who sought to raise us out of the race, by offering a sum of money. That process is called "greenmail." Our partners were $7 million richer the day when we had no cards to play.

But there's a sequel to this. Buoyed by confidence—perhaps overconfidence, we were off to the races again, and decided quickly to buy another company. This was Tech Pacific—Australia's largest distributor of computer products. It was indeed a larger company with sales in excess of $1 billion annually.

It was a disaster. It took us three years to turn its fortunes around. I felt sick from stress and anxiety and, on several occasions, contemplated resigning. But we stood by our beliefs and, after those three years, Tech Pacific became Asia's largest distributor of computer products.

In 1998, I came home, after 25 years abroad—after what Father Bernardo Vilas calls "the days of wasted youth."

When we invested in PLDT seven years ago, we found the same slow rank of repair and renewal. Critics told us that we couldn't change the culture. We proved that misconception to be wrong. We couldn't be vindicated, that our friend Jose Ivanisevic had we hired.

But we made the tough and unpopular decisions at PLDT. Like reducing the number of employees from 54,000 to 9,000. Like changing practices and encouraging transparency and good governance. Like convincing the minister of transportation to those of customers and entrepreneurs. Decisions about people are always difficult for us because First Pacific is an Asian company with Asian values. But headcount reduction was critical for PLDT to survive.

Now that PLDT has recovered, and is now the most profitable company in the country, our confidence in the Filipino's ability to succeed has been shattered—if not, despite the downsizing I mentioned earlier, we now have more people under our wings—almost 19,000—simply because PLDT is now a different company.

And to most of you who might be familiar with Filoil or Talk 'n' Text—it was a company in ruins. Nor had we sold another banks that Filoil could not pay its debts—the first time I've done that in my life. My silkworkers told me to close Filoil. I did not agree. I believed that the cellular frequency is static, as well as its brand, are personally valuable, as they have become today. Also, I did not want to unpeel the financial health of Smart Communications which Filoil owned much. After five years of rehab, Filoil's return to profitability has been close to unprecedented. It is now the country's third most profitable company—after PLDT and Smart.

Some of you have mixed with me the question—is business hard?

Business is not all bad. It is people—some people at least—that may make business bad. My business can prosper in the long term without the right values. The best performing companies are those that manage their businesses which meet ethical standards.

Transparency, accountability, integrity, discipline—all these good governance principles—must permeate every policy, every practice, of the company to flourish at First Pacific and PLDT.

Before I close, I'd like to make a personal request.

I'd like to ask each of you a favor. Give me bragging rights. Do something great. Something to be proud of in the future. I want to hear some incredible thing you've done. And I'd like to hear that it spoke at your graduation.

In return, I offer you a few suggestions of advice. Three, I say real. Stay true to what's best in yourself, to the best of your experience here at the Ateneo. Trust your instincts. Believe in yourself. Engage in sports, you'll need it as you grow.

Be brave. Be bold. Find something that moves you and do something about it. You have a voice, speak up. Make a change. You may not always be popular, but you'll be part of something larger and greater than yourself. Besides, making history is cool, isn't it?

But I also want to offer a warning, you will meet people who'll entice you to compromise your principles. They'll try to seduce you with money, power and perhaps, most dangerously, a sense of belonging. Don't let them, it's not worth it. You can have greatness and still get that job. You can have a conscience and still make money.

Let me end you off with one last thought.

I was born poor, but poor was not God's to be. And it shouldn't be here in you either. You can make it. Whatever you may wish to do with your future, you can make it. It gets dark sometimes, but storming nature always. Challenges turned into chances. Character knocks forth. In the end, faith will not disappoint.

You were not disappoint.

Bicol's treasured abaca earns RP dollars

By Ephraem Aguilar and Fernan Gonzar
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

AGRIBUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

DARASA, ALBAY—ABACA IS A wonder plant as far as Shell Bikini Hilaconen and husband Shelford are concerned.

The thousands of workers who have helped make the couple's Shelford Cottage Domestic a successful abaca craft enterprise in the Bicol region over the past decades would agree.

The Wilkins, from Shell's grandparents to her parents, are among the pioneers in the abaca industry here. Shelford started after Shell's parents, Antonio Bilbao and Leticia Fuentebella-Bilbao, decided to quit and pass on the business to Shel and Shelford when the two got married in 1973.

P3,000 capital

Shel, a teacher, and Uste, a mechanical engineer, were probably the youngest exporters when they went into the production of abaca placemats and doormats.

Overnight, after putting up P3,000 as initial capital for Shelford, Inc., it expanded their products into curtains and bed furniture, baskets and other handicrafts made from abaca fiber.

From three employees from the old Bilbao company, where Shelford used to work as a technical assistant, Shelford grew to an estimated 60 full-time employees, 1,200 in home artisans and a community-support fund of 2,500 families in general.

Governor Salvador Escudero Jr. president of Shelford and Shel is the executive vice president with Mitch, the couple's eldest daughter who handles marketing, representing the fourth generation in the Bicolnet in the abaca-export industry.

A big number of abaca workers in the countryside continue to earn a living from the company's ventures into the export of abaca handicraft, paper pulp, furniture pieces and other value-added abaca, according to Shel.

Fiberyarn, like handbags, carpets, ponchos, mats, floral accessories, wrapping material, wall paper, housewares baskets, bins, storage containers, lighting fixtures, table candles, accessories, hot pads, napkin drops and newsprint are very much in demand, according to Shel.

Exporters continue to fulfill an increasing demand for abaca products by the overseas market whose investors are convinced that its continuous enhancements in materials and innovations in the finished products by producers like Shelford.

Challenges

Shel says a major challenge to the abaca exporters is the strategy by developed countries to manufacture a synthetic material with similar properties to the abaca fiber.

"Abaca, an exotic green material, is being challenged by the existence of other products that are also 'earth-loved' and use competitive in product to countries where exporters have foreign government support," she adds.

Marlon Sebastian, public information officer of the Philippine Fiberyarn Development Authority (PFDA), noted how the area being planted to abaca has become smaller.

She explained that due to the low price of the fiber in the local market there have been fewer people venturing in the production of abaca.

"The sad matter that there will also be fewer lands tilled for abaca production," she added.

The export market

Fida records showed that the Philippines dominated the world's abaca export market, accounting for 85 percent of the supply with the United States as the country's biggest market for its cordage and raw fiber.

The Bicol region's major markets for its raw fibers are the United Kingdom, Japan, and China while markets for its fiberstyle are the US, Germany, Japan, Australia and Europe.

In 2005, the Bicol region's consumption of abaca reached 14,225 metric tons, 93.87 percent of which were used in pulp production, 5.33 percent in cordage, and .80 percent in fiberstyle.

The country's average annual production from 2001-2005 is 65,676 metric tons with Bicol's annual average production placed at 11,750 metric tons.

In the region, 62,813 hectares are planted to abaca with average production per hectare at 331 kilograms.

The current market price for fine quality abaca fiber is P46 to P48/kilo.

Considering, with the biggest area planted to abaca at almost 22,389 hectares, remains the biggest abaca-producing province in the region and in the country.

The province supplies 28 percent of the abaca fiber production of the Philippines and accounts for 60 percent of Bicol's fiber.

However, the impending ban on the gathering and stripping of abaca leaf sheaths or "bahbal" to be imposed by the government soon is cause for worry by handmade paper makers, abaca processors and traders in the province.

In the Bicol region, about half of the 44 abaca-processing handicraft makers are abaca leaf sheaths or "bahbal," in Guinobatan, small and medium enterprises, abaca includes handicraft items, generated $341,000 in exports and created 98.2 millions in domestic revenues.

Existing processed abaca industry players include nine handmade paper makers, 11 using handwoven paper products and combinations and two nanufacturers of the production of carpets and abaca "pinukpuk" textiles.

Executive Order No. 501, signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo last Feb. 2, 2006, has banned the harvesting, gathering, buying, selling and conditioning of matured and young leaf sheaths of abaca plants (Musa textilis Nee) for commercial purposes.

The leaf sheaths from the valid trees that is the stalk or stem of the abaca plant.

The EO stated that the unabated harvesting of "bahbal" is done by decimating the existence of abaca and threatens the source of fiber, known all over the world as Manila Hemp and contributing to the loss of $4.5 billion in revenues annually for the country.

The gathering of the raw materials, the EO added, has aggravated the spread of abaca viral diseases by mechanical means and the transporting of the "bahbal" to other areas.

Provincial Governor, either in charge of the Fida in Camarines told the Inquirer that the removal of "bahbal," widely practiced in Cagayan and other towns, exposes the inner layer of the abaca plant.

With the removal of more than 20 layers of leaf sheaths, the plant's growth would be affected and fiber production reduced.

The spread of abaca viral diseases has moved Fida to implement disease control and reinforcement projects and rehabilitation of affected areas.

ABACA is being challenged by attempts of developed countries to manufacture a synthetic material with similar properties to the abaca fiber.

After these preventive and suppressive measures against viral diseases in abaca, Sebastian added that perhaps after two to three years, there will be an increase in production.

Plight of loaders, workers

Former Cagayan de Oro mayor Edwin Tolledo, honorary chairman of Fida's convention that the gathering of "bahbal" is detrimental to plant growth.

Tolledo, who has shipped 20 truckloads of dried "bahbal" representing around $400 to Angeles City, buys the raw material at P7 a kilo from more than 200 gatherers composed mostly of women and children.

Each truckload consists at least 4,000 kilos of "bahbal" which he sells to the Angeles province buyers for P17 to P20 per kilo to be used as bed covers, wall decorations and other items geared towards the export market.

He said that the gatherers in this town of San Miguel deliver as much as 300 kilos of dried leaf sheaths every two days, the proceeds of which go to their daily needs and to pay off microfinance loans.

"It would be foolish for me to lose young leaf sheaths which are still wet," Tolledo said, adding the "bahbal" is normally removed by the abaca farmer prior to stripping.

Two other buyers of "bahbal" operate in Cagayan and Misamis Oriental, buying the material from abaca farmers for P4 to P6 per kilo while a Tabaco City-based buyer delivers the material on a roving cargo truck for the same price.

On the other hand, Simplicio Rimbaco, president of the Catanduanes Producers Association, assessed the ban, arguing that the "bahbal" would soon be allowed to rot away instead of being used in handmade paper making as well as for decorative accents in handicrafts.

Delmo Tesoria of Bonsai Handmade Paper & Handicraft said that while she uses only a small amount of "bahbal" for the manufacture of banana paper, it would be impractical for the government to completely prohibit the use of the raw materials especially as she plans to resume its wall décor production.

The last part, Lyza Molina, who has been making gift items for the past years under her own Lyza's Arts & Crafts, suggested that the government should instead concentrate on developing skills and providing financing for abaca farmers so that they could explore to the fullest the many uses of abaca.

Sugar is it in the Visayas

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—"SUGAR[ISM] is one of the most exciting crops not only in the Philippines, but in the world today," Negros Occidental Administrator James Ledesma says.

"This is because an oil price rise will also mean an increase in sugar demand. Finally, the demand for alternative fuels like ethanol, which comes from sugarcane, will continue.

This crop year (2005-06) milling-year sugar prices have been at an average of P1,150 per 50-kilo bag of raw sugar, compared to an average of P800 per 5-kg in the 2004-05 crop year, Ledesma says.

He also expects prices to remain above P1,000 per 1-kg next crop year.

"I think the fundamentals show a more sustainable good price for sugar because if world prices hold, domestic prices will hold," he says.

This crop year, the Philippines expects to produce 2.08 million MT of sugar by the end of the milling season on Aug. 31.

"We are 92 percent finished with milling this crop totaling so far 1.9 metric tons, he says.

As of Thursday, millgate raw sugar was selling in the 2005-06 crop year at P1,200 per 1-kg.

The workers directly and indirectly, he says.

With prices expected to stay good next year, Ledesma expects 80 production of sugar to increase next crop year to 2.15 million metric tons, which he says is "very doable."

"We could even hit a high of 2.2 million MT," he says.

THE RISE in oil prices increases demand for alternative fuels like ethanol which comes from sugarcane.

But even with the increase in next year's production, Ledesma expects prices to stay above P1,000 per 1-kg because prices of sugar in the world market remain high.

This is because Thailand had a bad crop while the United States has not recovered from the devastation caused to its sugar lands by two hurricanes last year.

Brazil, on the other hand, has kept its production steady with its sugarcane being used for ethanol production.

"So long as oil prices remain high, ethanol will increase and more an attractive alternative," Ledesma says.

With the world expanding in its use of ethanol as an alternative fuel, good prices of sugarcane will hold indefinitely, Ledesma says.

"Definitely there is no reason to be optimistic, the environment for the sugar industry to operate profitably exists," he adds.

Even if the Philippines produces more sugar than what is needed domestically, it can still export profitably in the world market at 14-16 cents per pound or about P980/per 1-kg, he says.

In Negros Occidental construction of an ethanol plant in San Carlos City starts this year and production of ethanol is expected in early 2008, Ledesma says.

The San Carlos Bioenergy Inc. plans to run San Carlos City to target-produce 1 liter a day to produce 25 to 30 million liters of fuel ethanol a year and 9 MW of electricity for partial export to the local grid.

If SBI, which is expected to be the first integrated fuel ethanol distillery and cogeneration plant in the country and is expected to need approximately 220,000 metric tons of cane per year.

Reynaldo Ruiming, president of the Confederation of Sugarcane Producers Associations of the Philippines, also says he expects good sugar prices next crop year.

"With the world market prices expected to remain good, we expect domestic prices to remain good, too," he says.

It has been a pretty good year for the sugar industry and no long as oil prices remain high this trend will continue, he says.

In response to good profits, he says many sugar planters had advanced the start of paying of the second half of the sugar income for sugar workers from the original deadline of April 16.

Wage Order No. 13 imposed new minimum wage rates effective June 16, 2005 in Western Visayas.

Workers in the sugar were to receive an increase of P18 a day to basic pay upon effectivity of the new wage rates or June 16 last year, and an additional P5 a day in June pay starting April 16 this year.

Those who could afford have also given their workers bonuses, he said, noting that some planters are still paying the same basic pay from bases in previous crop years.

Enrique Rojas, president of the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, says domestic sugar prices next crop year will remain good as long as the world market prices will not go down.

This is because it will not be profitable to smuggle world market sugar into the Philippines, he says.

The sugar duty does not export the Australian, Thai and American sugar industries in a manner unfairly as world market prices will remain good.

The 55 this crop year is estimated to yield 2.08 MT sugar from 158,000MT to 250,000MT because of the damage caused to to sugarlands by two hurricanes last year, he says.

"We expect the 55 to again include the Philippines in among the sources to fill the sugar quota next crop year," Rojas says.

Picking potential leaders

From page B2-A

have problems leading when they are unable to judge their own weaknesses. Brainstorming is not a helpful practice in leadership unless careful ideas are generated.

In the words of John Galsworthy, "Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem." Potential leaders have the rare ability to translate idealistic goals into realistic and workable actions. Leaders are not dreamers when chaos is the perfect place. They have the flexibility and fortitude to account for resistance in the ideal.

3. When they speak, who listens?

Potential leaders have a "holding court" quality about them. Their words carry weight. What they say is valuable and inspires action.

When watching groups of people interact, in a matter of five minutes, I can pick the leader every time. When it comes time for the group to make a decision, all eyes focus upon the person with the greatest influence.

The center of a person's influence speaks volumes about their potential in leadership. Here are seven key areas to evaluate the level of influence in a possible hire.

Character—who they are

Relationships—who they know

Knowledge—what they know

Passion—how strongly they feel

Experience—where they've been

Past successes—what they've done

Ability—what they can do

6. Do others respect them?

Respect is vital for leadership, yet it can be difficult to discern in young leaders who have not fully developed. Peer respect doesn't reveal ability, but it does character. I'll conclude this edition with the following acronym on respect. I have found it to be a helpful device to evaluate the responsibility of emerging leaders.

R—Respects their coworkers and exhibits self-respect. Instead of asking for respect, they give it and earn it.

E—Exceeds the expectations of others. Naturally sets the bar higher than anybody else can it for them.

S—Stands firm on convictions and values.

P—Possesses maturity well beyond their years and shows self-confidence.

E—Experiences a healthy family life.

C—Contributes in the success of others.

T—Thinks ahead of others. Potential leaders are marked by their ability to outpace the thinking of those around them.

For information or call 813-2732/433.

CONSUMER

Drug firm cuts prices of popular medicine

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DIXIE MASON ELAGDIMEN, Mine (GSK) is keen on adopting a marketing scheme initiated by its Manila unit that enabled the Anglo-American firm to sell some of its medicine at prices close to bags of prawn's counterparts in developing countries like the Philippines.

Dubbed "Value Health," the program sells some of GSK's products—the capsulized by the pill-to-brown badge stamped above the distinctive angle design on its packaging—at discounts to give the masses access to quality products. The more elevated GSK to Filipino image while increasing its market share.

"Value Health was conceptualized in the Philippines. The programs drawn interest from other GSK markets who are considering adopting it in their markets. Indonesia is the latest complainers," says GSK Philippines vice president Dean Cembrano, head of the group which made the program.

Value Health was piloted to represent Asia-Pacific at the second GSK International which covers operations outside the US and the topic excellence exchange where it got the top prize—the commercial excellence award.

GSK holds a learning forum annually where best practices are shared and the winning idea received an in-site commercial management teams based on insightful execution, adaptability to other markets and business impact," says Cembrano.

The program is of particular interest to GSK's Latin American operations where a big chunk of the population live below the poverty line.

Launched in 2004, the Value Health portfolio contained nine drugs worth for common illnesses and antibiotics. After introducing first line antibiotics in the original batch, GSK Philippines added five more products led by Amoxicillin and topical erythromycin-sulfonamides each to those used for pneumonia.

Cembrano notes the best sellers accounted for some 70 percent of GSK's gross sales in the Philippines. She says volume has increased much more than the percentage cut in prices.

Cembrano insists that a random survey showed that doctors have prescribed GSK's Value Health drugs to their patients by as much as 30 percent more.

While Value Health did not bring down prices to generic levels, Cembrano says "we made it low enough to make many people use the brands that they really wanted to use in the first place."

GSK Philippines is set to introduce a spin-off program, "Value Health Card," which will offer some discounts of at least 30 percent for high volume products such as those for hypertension and diabetes.

In 2006, Cembrano said few years were tasked to identify new opportunities to serve a greater part of the population by offering access to GSK's trusted brands at prices within their reach.

Cembrano says her group was driven because while GSK and other major drug firms have lost to their patents rivals by virtue of the price discounts, "we wouldn't deny thinking that people were not getting the same benefits of branded medicine from generic drugs."

While drug firms spend years on research and development to prove the potency of its drugs, Cembrano says the generic drug companies merely use the same type of molecules in their products without having to bother if they were as effective as the original.

Original drug makers have only up to 20 years to market their products and recoup their investments after which generic companies can sell similar drugs.

Shedding GSK's mostly image, Cembrano admits, has been few frustration in her two-future years in which GSK is ranked 5th in the P20 billion Philippine market. She is why to GSK's big thrust will be with other GSK Philippines launched Mine Healers two years ago, "Now we can start selling beyond the big four of the local retailers and hit the masses," says Cembrano who warped up medical representatives lugging around a huge bucket bag at the Makati Medical Center in 1982. "Now I can go to a tricycle driver and tell him a product he can afford and that he prefers."

BUY FILIPINO – NOT JUST A CONCEPT BUT AN ANSWER TO A CRISIS

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BUSINESS Monday

Picking potential leaders

THE LAW OF THE HARVEST cuts both ways. Those who are closest to me will determine the level of my success.

The year was 1864. The battle for America's future had been raging for over two and a half years.

Despite having a superior economy, an enormous edge in resources, and a far greater population, the North had been unable to gain the upper hand in the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln was frustrated at the North's inability to achieve victory.

Lincoln was forced to confront the reality of the Law of the Inner Circle. Although a brilliant leader, Lincoln was not a military man. As such, his success overseeing the Civil War depended upon finding a skillful field general to translate material advantages into actual victories.

Lincoln's two prior military commanders, George McClellan and Henry Halleck, had failed miserably. Each had repeatedly squandered opportunities to crush the Southern Army. With the war's outcome hanging in the balance, Lincoln's next selection would be one of the biggest decisions of his Presidency.

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

Noting the indecisiveness of previous army generals, Lincoln chose tough-minded Ulysses S. Grant to lead the army. Grant's willingness to pay the price of a total war doubled the South's scant resources, and led to the North's eventual victory.

Identifying potential leaders

Good leaders realize the significance of surrounding themselves with talented people. That's why leaders repeatedly ask me, "How can I be sure to hire the right person?"

I have never discovered a foolproof hiring practice, but I do have finding a great hire goes hand in hand with identifying potential leaders.

I'll explain eleven questions I use to spot a potential leader. Before I begin, I'd like to give credit to my mentor and friend Fred Smith. Several of these questions were developed from my conversations with him.

1. When looking for a leader, do I see a constructive spirit of discontent?

Constructive discontent is a leader's unmistakable itch. It's the trait making a leader averse to average and opposed to the status quo.

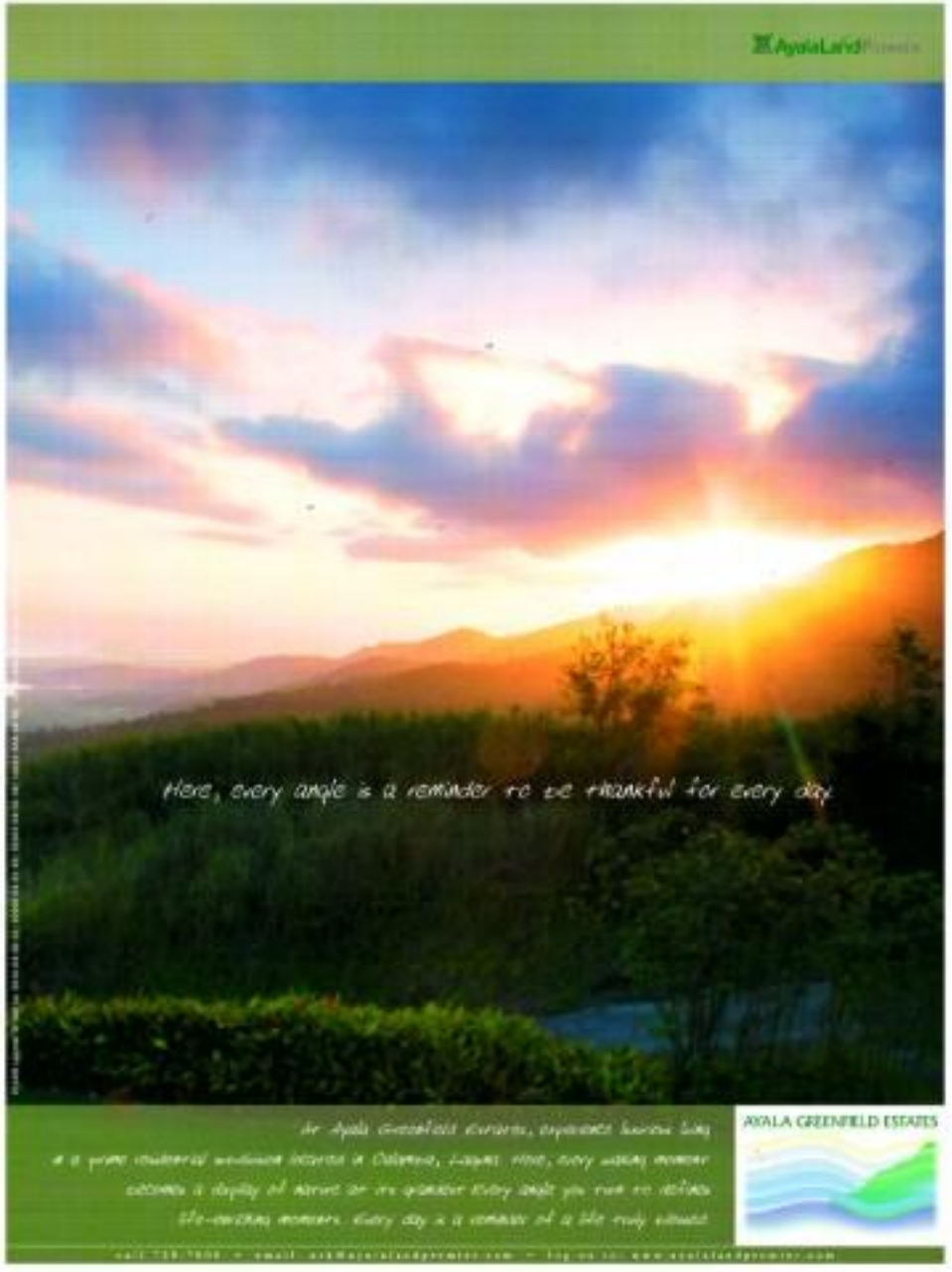
Potential leaders possessing constructive discontent will question existing systems and push for improvements. They perceive problems and come up with solutions.

As Kouzes and Posner say, leaders have a pioneering instinct. They are not afraid to step out into the unknown. They are willing to take risks, innovate, and experiment in order to find new and better ways to operate.

2. Do they offer practical ideas?

Eighty original thinkers can

READING TO »



LIFESTYLE
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GREEN Museum Palace

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

The trees of Tehran

By Jovenal Sanso
Contributor

TEHRAN IS NOT ONE of the most beautiful of the big cities I know. It has some 16 million inhabitants in its overflowing borders that join urban borders among the majestic mountains and dazzling golden-ochre plains of the desert provinces of the geography.

The structures architecturally survive through strife and earthquakes and the most inhuman eight-year war with Iraq, which have threatened ruin of homes and material forces. The struggles are mirrored in the deeply elements of the city and in its bodgepodge determinisms of urban planning.

But a most gratifying coherence is maintained by the phenomenal amount of trees nourishing the atmosphere of the city.

The city goes up around the magnificent mountains. It starts at the bottom where the least affluent members of society reside. As one ascends, one finds the quality of the habitat improving. Upward, one finds the exquisite de luxe apartment buildings

TWO TIERS IN

Iran's respect for trees is amazing for us who murder our forests and think that trees are for degradation and logging

NIRMADSMM Building

AFPMB Shahi Plaza (Abbasian Plaza)

GHASHGHAEI Mosque

The trees of Tehran

From page D

with marble floor pattern, and underground swimming pools.

The millennium construction frenzy which also involves restoring many important buildings, mosques, universities, hospitals. The tradition extensively will keep.

What strikes this Intelligentsia are the town and parks of all dimensions and categories. Truly they are unimaginable!

The big parks are splendid and big. There are finely joggers and children and timid lovers. For this country does not approve of "public displays of affection."

Every three or four blocks, there is some kind of verdict, the filled gardens, which may develop later in another two blocks into a truly great square.

The trees are a presence that is absolutely willed and totally ingrained in this society's ethos. Iran's respect for trees is amazing for an urban murder our theories and think that trees are for degradation so that we conduct attitudes of logging.

I have been told that there are about as many trees as inhabitants in the city. I can assure you that, at times, you may humorously scratch that perhaps there are two respected than the trees, for the traffic a truly unpainting in a foreigner like me.

The Islamic pedestrian population separation around, about and across the traffic of cars, motorcycles, trucks and buses, amid whistling masses of metal and gasoline vapors.

In the face of this, the ladies with the swirling chadors seem the most in danger, **looking like Batman with his billowing cape** totally encompassed with the roaring traffic.

The trees are deeply protected. They are numbered and catalogued by the city hall. They are literally untouchable. The roads are obliged to give way to the trees and the sidewalks. The trees take priority in road space.

The arboreal priority is clearly seen in how some trees are truly in the middle of the streets and sidewalks. Apparently the road builders had dodged around the giants, which stand in their own eminently irrigated little channels, taking their water directly down from the mountains.

GREEN Museum Palace up close (top); and Czech house (Christine Brothers Museum)

It is a wonder to see how the trees thrive with their roots soaking in floods of water running down as considerable speed, gurgling and babbling. They must be of a special kind endemic to other parts of the world.

Erosion is ignored by the trees as all arrests. Or, are they the ones preserving the terrain? Can we learn something from this, we with our landslides?

Arboreal consistency

The arboreal philosophy continues. Wherever there's a construction or repair, the trunks of the trees are protected by slats.

Some buildings have to alter enough space for the trees to continue their total existence. Facades are deviated, and every other corridor makes has to reverse, veer, depart, digress, diverge in an unconscious tender subservience of the kings of the land.

Some buildings have to curve out holes to let in the irregularity of a "tourist." I am sure some architects would like to get up one night and tear down this unpaided decision.

Cities there are only very few police forces visible at all hours of the day and night, they would very easily stand out with an electric arm and murder abominous climate. "But the trees are not cut, so it seems hopeful for trees it is only a cultural trait among Iranians.

In the main streets, a good fourth of road space is allotted to the watering system containing the massive trunks in common, eternal means. People cross the very wide streets and then have to find a quaint Japanese-like little bridge to get on to the sidewalk.

The considerable channels have metropolis with the streets at the intersections. The angles of approach are breathtaking to an inexperienced flatlanded pedestrian like me; it demands a bit of calculating, timestrobing and expert decisions.

For the drivers, all this is ingrained and I still have to see a car slipping into these deep watery excursions.

Many a joy comes with the fountains one finds in many gardens and parks. Very thankfully there are no signs of dog droppings in Mesopotamia!

Snowy experience

One truly magical moment came to me in full winter when some in the garret neared the town, forming white arches that could have been imagined by a gothic architect or miniaturist. It was breathtaking to hear all the little imperfections of urban noise and tear pampered into undulating masses of comfortable muffle, reaching up to the highest branch and leaf.

The trees continued their worry-like presence in total tranquility. Then cold love, immutable, gurgled waters from the equally abundant mountains, which all assisted to give the joyful serenity to all the living.

In other parts of Iran, the contemplation and undulations of the forests were beautifully enhanced by what looked like white sugar powder, giving an extra quality to the hot relief of endless kilometers. This was the case when I was on my way to Isphahan.

I could not hold back my tears, for the colors were heightened into myriad shades of variety and contradictions and harmonious profiles.

On the way back I had the other side of the effects: cols, the peaks and the valleys interlocking toward Tehran, greeting more and more snow in the north.

Isphahan changed into a magical Persian carpet as the ground of the city became a basin of levitation. Inside the great masterpiece of the main mosque, with its twinkling white allure of perspective, snow was enshrined in pastels and orchestral pomposity.

The snowy land due to a feeling of floating joy. The domes in blazing blues and greens, topped the great portals of the splendid square, where snow made the plants and every corner a delight.

No photo-cut conveys the rapport between human body and the surrounding panorama of the cultural past. So much could ever wake up the senses in an experience as utter that allows one to converse with the centuries revived.

'Sagala' book pays tribute to colorful May feasts

THE COFFEE TABLE book "Sagala, The Quest of Philippine Devotion," delves into the exciting historical background of the Flores de Mayo and the Santacruzan, colorful March-summer feasts in the Philippines.

It is also a treasury trove of vintage photographs and illustrations dating back to the 1890s, compiled by an exhaustive folio of gluttonous photographs of contemporary and regular – the beauty queens, fashion models, entertainment icons – along with distinguished lay-devotees and matrons wearing the best creations of the Fashion Designers Association of the Philippines (FDAP).

The book is written by Alice Florendo and Carol Asuncion, it recounts yesterday, today and beyond as the first Lourdes Walk Award for Print Austria was editor of several lifestyle, travel and fashion magazines, and considered a pioneering fashion stylist for numerous publications.

Meant to be a contribution to the preservation and enhancement of Philippine culture and heritage, "Sagala" is published by FDAP in commemoration its 25th anniversary, headed by Edgar San Diego, the FDAP is the premier and oldest organization of fashion designers in the country.

The group is credited for some of the most spectacular Sagala festivals held in the country like the Miss Universe Hocus de Mayo in 2004 and the Santacruzan ng Greenwich in 1998.

Since the '80s, FDAP has also been religiously participating in the country's biggest and most glamorous Flores de Mayo festival organized annually by the Congregacion del Inmaculo Sembor del Nino Jesus, City of Manila, Department of Tourism and Cultural Philippines.

In hardbound and with over 200 glossy pages in full color, "Sagala" will be formally launched in a glittering affair at the Century Park Hotel on April 26 at 8 p.m.

The book launching will be highlighted by a photo exhibit of "Sagalas, Reynasas and the Women" prepared by the book's principal photographer, FDAP member Richard Tapia, along with a fashion presentation of the best of FDAP's Sagala creations.

Call 3746491 or 4100302, or visit the FDAP website at www.fdapshow.com.

Why not join an environmental camp?

From page D4

Isla projects.

The camp ends in Semirara, from where participants take the scenic route back to Manila.

Island Caravan's four-day Aguasan Adventure Post Isla participants watch local SOS of Isla who lend their skills to the environmental importance of the vast Aguasan Marsh.

Habitudes introduces the cultural magnitude of the marsh area, pointing out the ancient Indanghol, proving the existence of advanced pre-Hispanic civilization in the area.

Sports activities organized in the environmentally sensitive locale include trekking, camping, climbing, rappelling, caving, and kayaks on the single-rope technique.

Departure is from Roxas after a visit to the Indanghol artifacts in the museum.

Safari Green Getaway is only one of the travel/eco-tours offerings by Island Caravan. Specializing in responsible tourism, the company's offerings present an authentic view of the Philippines.

Locals (students, residents, cultural or natural aspects) from the host destinations take visitors through their home grounds with time based familiarity. There are presentations by expert historian, cultural and environmental workers knowledgeable about the resources in the area.

AGUASAN Centennial Tree

Island Caravan tours are designed as personal, meaningful encounters with Philippine life, an approach that radically differentiates the company from other tour operators.

Island Caravan also organizes walking tours in urban areas (Vigan, Manila, Iloilo) on special themes, culinary explorations, historical tours in Southern Tagalog.

Island Caravan tours are extraordinary experiences, responsible tourism offerings of specialized tours—historic, cultural, culinary, resorts, environmental, trekking, or biking.

Upon request the agency can tailor special tours to specific requirements of large or small groups.

This summer, try discovering the Philippines for what it really is. See the authentic Philippines not as a touristic product packaged to slick, commercial tourist events for the mass market.

Island Caravan summer departures are: Sorsogon Compost, April 29-May 3, North Luzon Rediscovery, May 13-19, Aguasan Adventure, May 25-28.

E-mail bgsun@hotmail.com, reply.pop@yahoo.com or dondelrosario@sc.net.ph; call 8967507 or 8962630 loc 304 or 8961865.

E-mail the author at ajbDalisay@hotmail.com

Manila Cathedral to mark 25th year as basilica

THE MANILA METROPOLITAN CATHEdral-basilica, the premier church of the Archdiocese of Manila and seat of the monsignor, will celebrate its 25th anniversary as a basilica with activities leading up to April 27.

Declared by Pope John Paul II on April 27, 1981.

Evolving from a tiny church built in 1571 by Fray Juan de Vivero, the present neo-Romanesque Byzantine Manila Cathedral was consecrated to the service of a local see by virtue of a papal decree issued motu proprio by Pope John Paul II on April 27, 1981.

The honor was granted by the Vatican because of the cathedral's rich and colorful history spanning over 400 years, its perseverance and excellent architecture, and its role in the lives of the faithful as venue for various religious, liturgical and cultural activities in the country.

To kick off the anniversary celebration, an exhibit will be opened today. The exhibit is on one of the side chapels and highlights the significant events in the cathedral during the past quarter of a century.

Also today, at 12:10 p.m., the Trisagion, or a three-day Mass series, will begin. It will end with Manila Auxiliary Bishop Bernardo Cortez as the presider on April 26.

On April 25 at 12:10 p.m., Cardinal Ricardo will preside at the anniversary Mass during which will be launched several cathedral projects: a video documentary and a tour brochure on the Cathedral-Basilica; a newly added section in the Cathedral-Basilica's website providing details about the church's becoming a basilica, and the Manila Metropolitan hymn.

Before the Mass, the Cardinal will also officiate the blessing of the Cathedral-Basilica's newly renovated sacristy and the new liturgical vestments.

On April 26, at 7:30 a.m., a praise concert will be held, featuring Indian pianist Maestro Rolando Nicolas. The concert will be in remembrance of the late Pope John Paul II and inclusive of Cardinal Sin's

Images of death and rebirth

"I THIRST," by Tina Revilla; "Carrying of the Cross," by Elan Ramirez and "Kinukpito," by Fidel Sarmiento

HOW NEARLY 300 YEARS OF CATHOLIC Christianity have affected the Filipino world-view is shown in the Easter exhibit "Pabasa" in Gallery Nine (tel 6577302) in SM Megamall. The show displays nearly 60 works of interpretation of the Passion iconography by senior and young artists.

Easily the most striking is an untitled work by Buen Calubayan along the lines of the Arte Povera movement. The canvas is wrapped with cellophane, inside are sympathetic flowers trapped by plastic, value lighting and the sometimes fluorescent of viewers.

One could take the work as Calubayan's depiction of the overdrawn and purity of the Lamb, represented here by the fragile cellophane, just to the disorderly. Through the artistic media he has chosen, the artist evokes as well the frustrations, since the white petals bruised by decay and crushed by the oppressive tape seem to beckon from the frame, angering rebirth.

Of course, the work realizes a special fulfillment of artistic vision because of its materiality. By its use of natural and manmade media, it pushes modernistically on the relation between life and art, seeing and thinking, birth and death.

The same bravery, spoken in accented by Fidel Sarmiento in "Kinukpito" but in a mode that is radically different from Calubayan's hyperrealism.

The viewer sees the crucifix in the foreground set against a dreamlike landscape where one sees, emerging of the country's Hispanic heritage and a contemporary sensibility with light and promise.

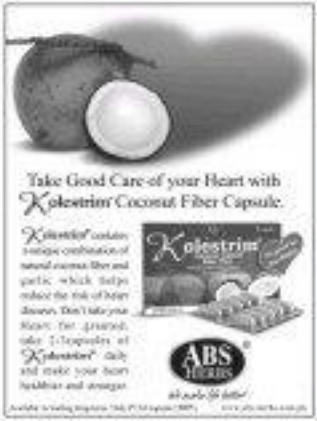
The work, therefore, is a cultural inquiry into the history of evangelization in the Philippines.

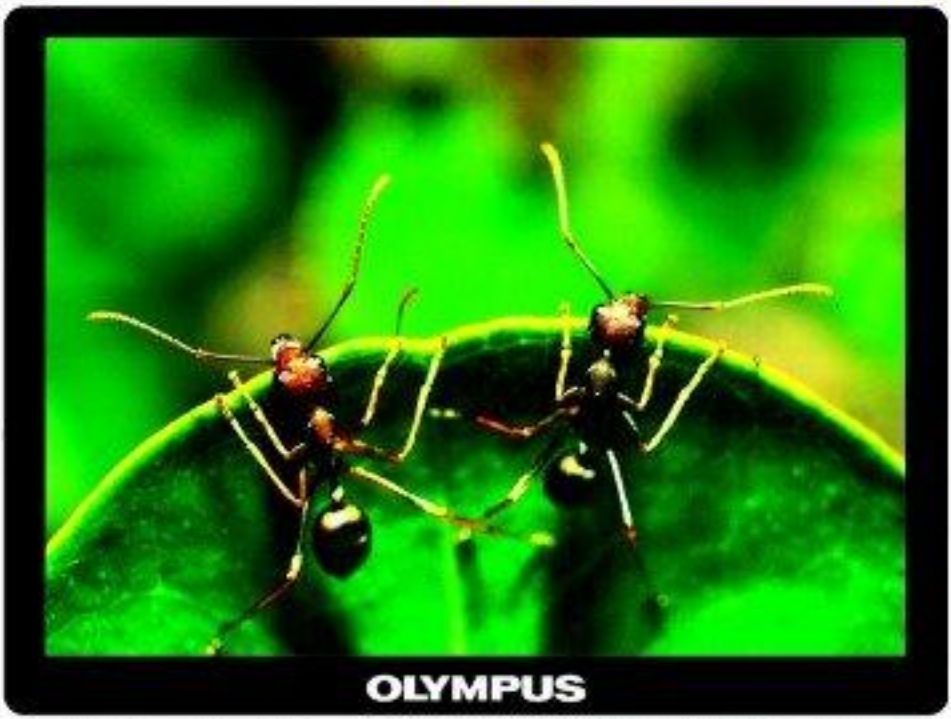
Two Roman's "I Thirst" portrays Christ through a combination of figurative and abstractive modes. The melting powerfully embodies a key sentiment of Christ on the Cross.

ARTE Povera work, by Buen Calubayan

Meanwhile, Elan Ramirez' well-composed "Carrying of the Cross" engages the viewer by its trick of foregrounding the Cross and hiding the face of Christ, thus highlighting the earthly humiliation and suffering of the Son of God.

—Gerry B. Zulueta





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OLYMPUS

Why not join an environmental camp?

"WILD, GREEN SUMMER" is a perfect vacation activity that parallels Earth Day Network, an NGO that marks the month of April with environmental activities, planned to inspire young Filipinos to care for their environment.

Innovative tour organizer Island Getaways introduces Wild, Green Summer, an outstanding summer program for Filipino youth ages 14-22 that combines travel, sports and environmental activities.

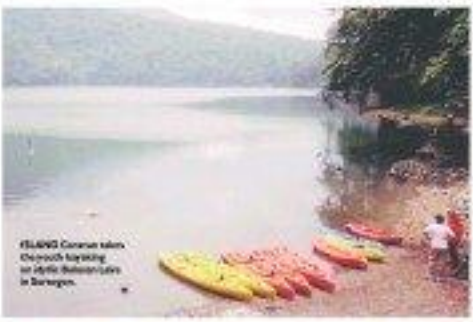
The environmental camps running four to six days take urban youth out of the cities to explore nature in Agusan del Norte or Surigao, exposing them to the stunning beauty of the Philippine countryside. It is highlighted by the interactive participation of recognized environmental or cultural resource persons, who advance respect and care for the natural and cultural environment.

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

In cooperation with the Department of Tourism, Island Getaways provides guides who supervise the student activity and resource them to local officials, environmental NGOs and technical experts from the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) who provide the learning components of the various camps.

Camps create awareness and appreciation of the natural environment through a range of sightseeing and sports activities which include trekking, rappelling and kayaking.



ISLAND Caravan takes City youth kayaking on idyllic Bukson Lake in Surigao.

There is another agenda to the camp. Youth participate in environment work. During Wild, Green Summer camps, participants plant trees and reforest, and this is billed, clean up beaches, so performs whatever task is necessary to bring Nature and man into harmony.

Instead of classroom modules, community-immersion allows participants to connect with local officials, scientists, fishermen and farmers who provide personal insights into rural life and its environmental responsibilities which nurture the sustainability of the people's means-based livelihood.

In a camp atmosphere of fun and camaraderie, participants learn factual and hard lessons on respect of Nature, ultimately evolving into environmental warriors.

Conquest

Surigao Conquest begins in Legazpi, then continues in the Caguayan Valley and other cultural sites during the five-day tour, then on to the PNOC Geothermal Plant where participants are introduced to the facility. They will be billeted there.

From there, they will do forest treks together with DENR officials and visit a hot sanctuary, springs and waterfalls.

After meeting officials in the Mabuhay Village Hot Springs, they will be accompanied by Protected Area Management Board officials to visit Bukson Lake and to replant mangroves at a reforest-

NEXT STORY, P3

LIFESTYLE

"I HAVE real living but my art and my music. They are my real wealth."

Cecile Licad survives cancer scare; holds recital of her life in Manila

In thanksgiving during her concert here, she will also go to Paoay Church

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

WHEN CECILE LICAD PERforms in Philadelfilo Theater on Thursday, April 27, I will have watched her performing career for 31 years. Which means I know how she performed as a 14-year-old, as a debutante at 18, as a young wife at 25, and as mother at 26.

We first met in 1975 during a performance at St. Agnes Academy in Legazpi City.

I wasn't that deep in classical music yet, but that performance changed my entire outlook. I couldn't sleep after that and I was listening to her recital tape day in and day out. I suppose that is what they call obsession.

What do I remember about that first

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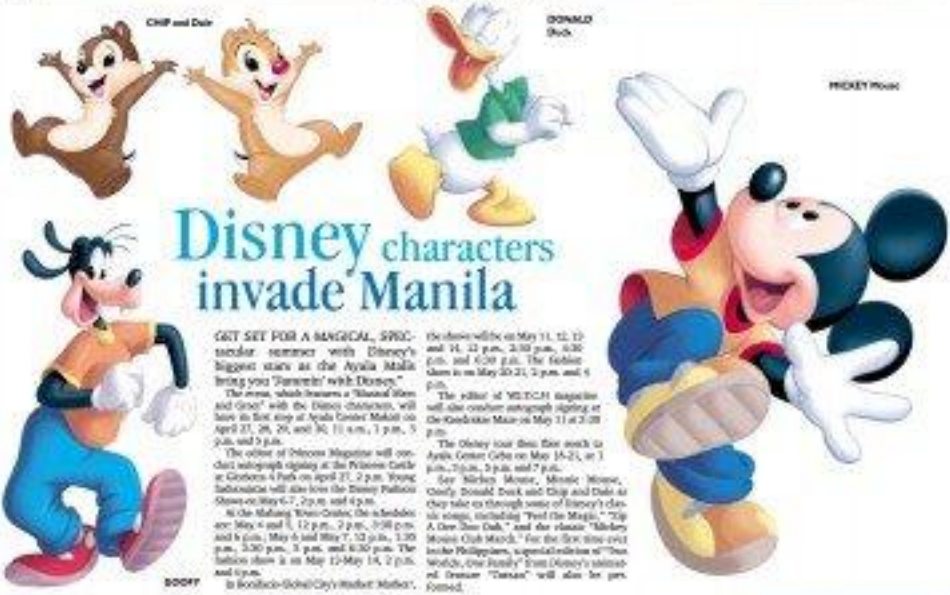


Disney characters invade Manila

GET SET FOR A MAGICAL, SPECtacular summer with Disney's biggest stars as the Ayala Malls bring you "Summer with Disney."

The event, which features a "Enchanted Show and Greet" with the Disney characters, will have its first stop at Ayala Center Makati on April 27, 28, 29, and 30, 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The editor of Princess Magazine will conduct autograph signing at the Princess Castle at Glorietta 4 Park on April 27, 2 p.m. Young fashionistas will also love the Disney Fashion Shows on May 6-7, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

At the Malvarez Bros. Center, the schedules are: May 4 and 5, 12 p.m., 2 p.m., 3:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.; May 6 and May 7, 12 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. The fashion show is on May 13-May 14, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

In Bonifacio Global City's Market! Market!, the shows will be on May 11, 12, 13 and 14, 12 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The fashion shows is on May 20-21, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

The editor of WATCH magazine will also conduct autograph signing at the Kenkoshite Mall on May 13 at 2:30 p.m.

The Disney tour then first stock in Ayala Center Cebu on May 19-21, at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

See Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Goofy, Donald Duck and Chip and Dale as they take us through some of Disney's classic songs, including "Feed the Magic," "Zip A Dee Doo Dah," and the classic "Mickey Mouse Club March." For the first time ever in the Philippines, a special collection of "Two Worlds, One Family" from Disney's animated feature "Tarzan" will also be performed.

'Urban Stew: The Manila Menu'

SOMEONE BETTER CAPTURED AND CHRonicled the peculiar tales of Manila than the new book "Urban Stew: The Manila Menu" by Scottish-born author Bruce Currie. The 159-page book is a compilation of 78 essays on the author's firsthand experiences and anecdotes on urban living in the metropolis—the unforgettable, heart-warming, hilarious and disgusting but all of these distinctly "Manila."

Comparing living in Manilato a "stew," Currie distributes the book into five courses all of small snacks-like entries, specific snacks, soups, main meals, side dishes and desserts, with each supply with its own quirky bit.

Having discovered himself to be India's way of life, the author talks about amusing tales such as the Filipinos' self-proclaim, penchant for soap operas, hands-on attitude of special occasions, and the city's vibrant night life.

But also presents an all-time-sad take on perennial problems such as poverty, traffic gridlock, urban misery, media piracy, the sometimes dreadful local culture, the high-end lifestyle of the rich and celebrities, and the country's trembling fortunes like bangis among others.

His witty observation of these issues is unveiled well on governmental authorities to take action.

In the last chapters of the book, the author goes beyond the confines of the simplistically and explores the cultural anecdotes of the countryside.

Bruce Currie is a renowned travel humorist and freelance writer who has traveled 64 countries to discover the beautiful sides to the world.

Currently working as financial adviser in Makati, the author is publishing a series of essays under his books titled "Confessions Ex-Con Expats," which chronicles the ex-pat's life in Southeast Asian countries. Published by Monsoon Editions Publishing, it is available at leading bookstores.

Call 757-8080 or 899-8080?, send inquiries at info@mail.com or log on to www.bookmakers.com.

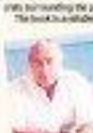
Leonardo da Vinci in mystery novel

The Da Vinci mystery continues with "The Secret Supper" by best-selling Spanish author Javier Sierra, translated by Alberto Blanquet, the novel attempts to dig deeper into the mystery of one of the most famous murals of all time, "The Last Supper."

The book takes you to 1492 in Milan, Leonardo Da Vinci is completing "The Last Supper." Told through a series of anonymous letters, Pope Alexander VI discovers a baffling and blasphemous secret that he is determined to decode. Enter Dominican Inquisitor and cryptographer Fr. Agustin Cayre, assigned to spy on the painter to discover the secrets he is weaving into the painting. The book gives us an entertaining revelation; the 12 apostles in this painting are actually well-known heretics. Almost now raises the question; is Leonardo Da Vinci, indeed a heretic? An brilliant and deadly pair of wits between the Inquisitor and the Painter, the book takes this reader on a mind-boggling ride to unravel the secrets surrounding the painting.

The book is available at Power Books.

Focus on Ludlum



Best-selling author Robert Ludlum is Power Books Specialty Store's Author for April. Born in New York, raised in New Jersey and resident on Connecticut, Ludlum started writing early in his childhood. After graduating from high school, he served as a US Marine during World War II. Ludlum acting roles on on Broadway, and also worked as a theatrical producer. His eclectic background may have been the inspiration for the spy thrillers he is best known for today.

He has written 21 novels, each one a New York Times bestseller. He has more than 290 million of his books in print, which have been translated into over 32 languages. His novel, The Matlock Paper, his unpublished manuscripts have been completed and published with the help of ghostwriters, a true testament to his unmatching popularity. His novels are complete with technical, biological and physical details that show the meticulous research he puts in for each novel.

Some of his well-known novels include "The Scarlatti Inheritance," "The Matarese Circle" and "The Chancellor Manuscript." His other works have been made into films and mini-series, including "The Bourne Supremacy."

Ponente Books has branches at Greenbelt 4 (756-7655) to 75, Megamall (632-6898) to 99, Gateway Town Center (926-6602) to 03, Glorietta (757-0101), Shangri-La (635-0067) to 70 and Robinsons Place Ermita (525-0049) to 3490.

20 world DJs in one workshop

FOR THE THIRD ASIA-EUROPE MUSIC Camp called "FinPULSE," the Asia-Europe Foundation (Asef) joins hands with the Ondaruci International Art Festival on May 14-21 to bring together 20 emerging DJs from 13 countries: Austria, Belgium, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

They will engage in a one-week series of DJ plugout and workshops through comprehensive digital media experimentation.

A close-up on the possibility of representation, assimilation and adaptation of Asian and European DJ culture will be presented by guests Dub from Asian Underground, Tom Excellent of Seats of Bengal and Gen-E of Sophia Records (UK), and China's Yang Bing.

Leon Lin, producer, Pentatonic Workshop (China), Aleksander Morozzi, artistic director of Clubtransmit Festival (Switzerland, and Asef's program manager for FinPULSE, Beate Schmitter, compose the team of trainers for this Beijing project.

FinPULSE is a program of the Asia-Europe Foundation's Cultural Exchange arena for the Asia-Europe Music Camp, designed to provide cyberdrivers for young people in exchange their ideas on music to aim is to encourage fresh minds to pursue the development of their music concepts by learning from each other. The duel program label FinPULSE was coined to stress the individuality and spontaneity that is apparent among young musicians.

E-mail events@asef.org.

Fellows to national writing workshop named

THE UST CENTER FOR CREATIVE WRITING and Studies announces the names of the successful applicants to its 7th National Writers Workshop.

The successful applicants for English poetry are Mona Rosa M. Veric (USC), Alistair Francisco F. dela Cruz (UP), Jennifer C. Macapagal (UP Manila), Margaux Dominique E. Hernandez (UST) and Tess Sabila (UST).

The successful applicants for English fiction are Hellel L. Muñoz (DLSU), Anicelus Dennis (DLSU) and Clark G. Smith (UST).

The successful applicants for Filipino are Rosanne Maria Belen Hipolito Bolton, Hazel E. Gaza (Ateneo), Aisha Catherine P. Collado (UPLB), Irene Cating (UST) and Sarah Jane B. Cruzan (UP).

The 7th National Writers Workshop will be held May 2-6 at the UST Creative Writing Center. It will focus on poetry, fiction, one-act play and creative nonfiction in English and Filipino. To conduct the workshop are Ophelia A. Dimalanta, Cirilo F. Bautista, Michael M. Coroza, Lualhati de Mesa, Jose Dalisay Torres, Nestor Gael Casimiro Cuevara, Eros Atalia and Carlos Lee.

John Robert Powers releases personality development titles

IN THE RECENT MEETING OF FRANCHISEES of John Robert Powers International in Bangkok, China Upton, JRP international vice president, presented a series of user-friendly authoritative books based on the JRP curriculum. They are called "Powers Red Book Series."

The books, according to Upton, "will serve as a natural extension of John Robert Powers' expertise in a wider audience and entice a global playing field. Through this series of books, the John Robert Powers brand can remain to authority, expand its influence and increase its renown."

The first volume is "Social Skills: A Modern Guide to Global Living," which has just been released.

The other franchise schools of JRP are found in Bangkok, Jakarta, Surabaya, Osia Pasar Ibadi, Kota Depanking and Medan (all in Indonesia), Tokyo, Fukuoka and Seoul, South Korea.

R. LAMBERA Limited

Fulbright lecture on the novel at UST

FILIPINO-AMERICAN WRITER R. Zamora Linmark will deliver his Fulbright lecture, "Pinoy Rodeo: Popular Culture, Memory, Identity (Re)Invention, and the Novel," on April 27, 1 p.m. at the Miguel Lopez room of the Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas.

The lecture is hosted by the Department of Languages and Department of Media Studies of the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters, and by the Americanist, the official UST student organ.

Linmark are Owner-Commissioners of the Ateneo de Manila University and Akademy Council for La Salle University.

A Fulbright scholar affiliated with UST, poet-fictionist Linmark is the author of the celebrated novel, "Rolling the R's," published by Kaya Press of New York. Last year, the Hanging Press of New York released his poetry volume, "Prime Time Apparitions." Linmark has also finished his second novel, "Leslie."

Linmark received the 2000 US National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry. His works are required readings in American university courses on Asian American letters.

The public is invited.

Bart Guingona offers acting workshop

ACTORS ACTORS INC. (AAI), one of the country's most respected theater companies, opens its doors to aspiring and professional performers in an 2006 Summer Acting Workshop, which is open to teens and adults.

The workshops will be conducted by film Award-winning theater actor, director and producer Bart Guingona, who most recently directed the hit musical "Once on This Island."

Guingona, who has completed grants in London for theater direction and theater education, will employ a wide range of methodologies, theoretical and practical applications to help bring out the individual's own gift or expressive confidence.

Guingona, who has directed some of the country's most acclaimed productions in recent memory, was a member with Repertory Philippines for nine years before co-founding AAI with other respective veterans such as Antoinette Hinunda, Michael Williams, Menchu Gaudiampos-Valle, Bodjo Lim, Rosalyn Perez and Cita Astala, among others.

The three-week workshop will run May 1-20 and will have very limited slots available. Call 556-5644 or 09 17-5280746. E-mail actorsactors@yahoo.com.

Cecile Licad survives cancer scare; holds recital of her life

Homepage B4

(cont'd)

A PMS rush was roaring in the middle of his rendition of Rimsky's concertos, but her interpretation of a Chopin scherzo left me in total awe—of her skill.

It didn't occur to me that she was barely 14 at the time. I didn't know what to expect from her because she was running around the hallway of St. Agnes before the concert, in the commotion of the moment.

Five years later, she was a big name not just in Manila but also in New York, whose her debut with the New York Philharmonic was a big success. (On that night, Itzhak Perlman-Avanera was escorted by Van Cliburn, and Licad's mom cried a river out of sheer happiness for her daughter's artistry.)

Marriage beckoned five years later. When Cecile's father, Dr. Jesus Licad, called to say that my favorite prodigy was getting married to a prize-winning Brazilian cellist, I thought I misread the development, and is showed in the long silence after the news was relayed to me.

I knew every aspect of that marriage. I saw the pianist as a dedicated wife and a doting mother.

She gave birth in New York in August (the week Manila was in the middle of a coup d'etat.

In the year she was preparing for a Tchaikovsky concerto, we were transported to rehearsals at the Cultural Center of the Philippines like nannies, lugging feeding bottles and utensils.

She was deep into a Brahms concerto when her son, Okuno, was hardened by an asthma attack.

I thought every time she agonized over her son's condition, she more deeply she played.

And on the year Okuno turned 10, Cecile realized her marriage was over. (She confirmed the breakup on the eve of a recital in Davao.

She was in deep emotional turmoil when she called her mom. "Should I cancel this concert, Mama? I may not be up to it in this condition."

"Don't cancel," the mother advised. "Face the year bear."

After the recital, where the pianist got a standing ovation, Cecile called her mother.

"Mama, my concert went very well. I just realized I don't need a husband. I just need my music."

Higher level

It was after that separation that everyone noticed she was playing in a much higher level and in a manner that dumbfounded even her Columbia Artist manager.

Two years ago, I received a gunrifled message from her in-mom that left me (confused for what seemed like a lifetime. She said even Cecile didn't want this message relayed to me. It was the end of Christmas 2004.

I wondered what it was, but from the way Mrs. Licad sounded, I knew it was serious.

When the message was finally released to me, there was long silence on the phone. I kept it for days and couldn't keep it to myself any further.

I decided to consult with filmmaker Marilou Diaz-Abaya and Mommy Buencamino in the morning room of the Blue school where they taught. When I broke the news, Marya broke into tears.

When she recovered, Marilou said, "Well, Pebbs, let's just pray. Just trust the Lord."

The bad news was that Cecile had signs of cancer, and an operation would reveal whether it was her soul or a false alarm.

In New Year of 2005, I was drinking mulled wine rounds of beer in the bistro of actor Joel Torre and looking despondent every day. The operation would take place in two weeks.

During those two critical weeks, Cecile had two concerts in Columbus, Ohio and Louisville, Virginia—Rasel and Chopin concertos.

When Cecile found out I knew about her condition, we both sounded like characters on death row.

Remembering how Marilou Abaya reacted to the sad news, I heard myself muttering on the phone, "Let's just pray, Cecile."

A good two weeks after the operation, Cecile said the doctor smiled more than to make sure.

"Make sure what?" I asked.

"That (she) have to."

When I heard it, I jumped for joy.

Meanwhile, the pre-operation concert of Cecile jolted even the critics, and I thought Cecile probably played as though that concert was her last.

A Scottish music critic wrote of that concert: "The Saturday evening concert at Glyndor Hall was not just another run of the mill. For whatever reason, it was the pianist's best performance in recent memory capped by the amazing performance of Cecile Licad. There was a lot more in Licad's extraordinary artistry revealed in Chopin's Concerto No. 2 With the orchestra's equally convinced support, this was a concerto experience of the highest order."

A month after the operation, Cecile said the cancer symptom was a false alarm.

"Pebbs, I will still be alive for God knows how many years. But I can still play till I am 90."

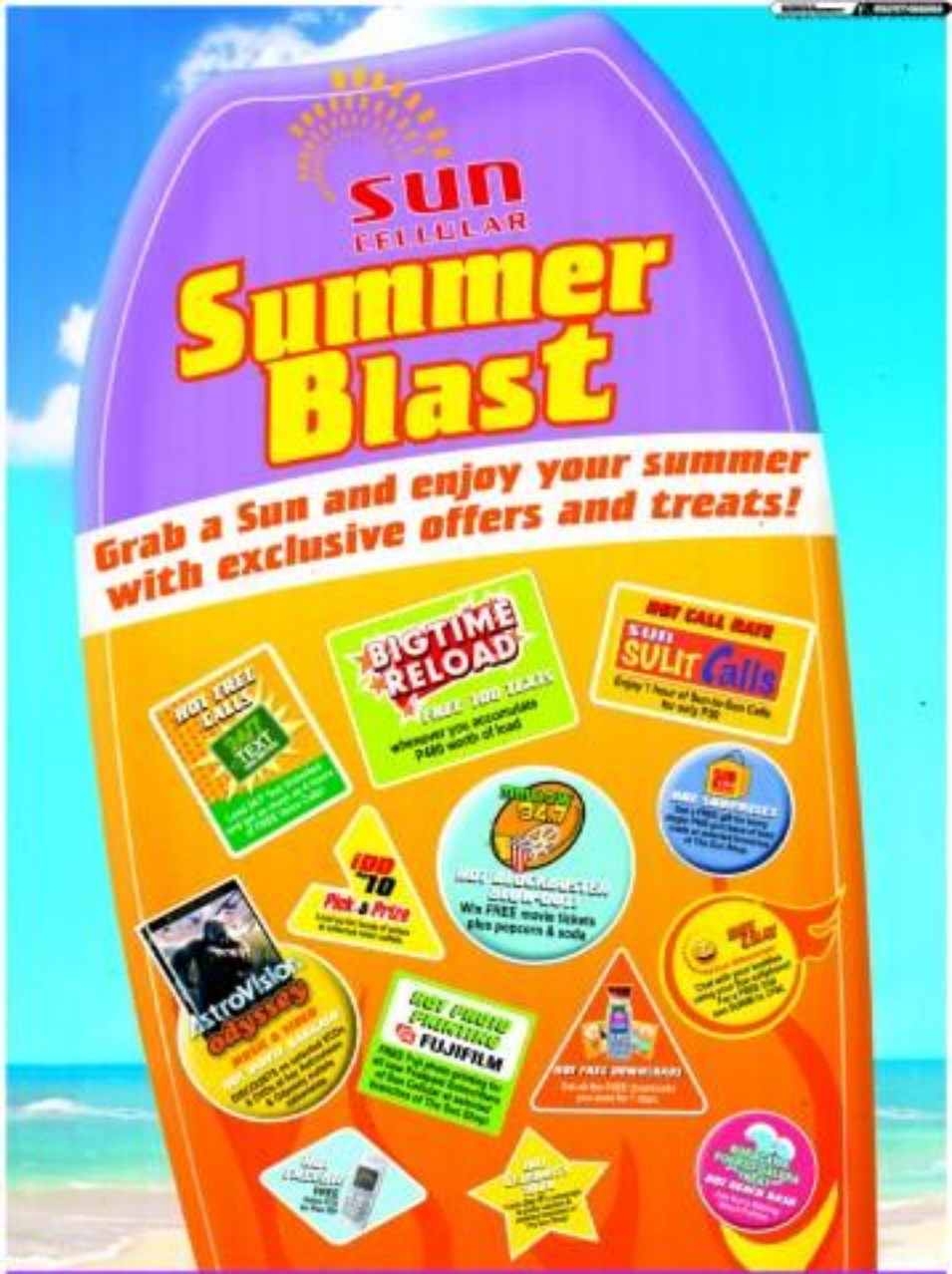
In thanksgiving during her concert here, Cecile Licad will go to Penny Church on Sunday, 1 will host a person who went through the trials of her art and her life and remains an artist of the highest order.

"Pebbs," she once said over the phone, "I have nothing but my art and my music. They are my real wealth."

Indeed, she has gone a long way from the scene I remember running around the school corridor of St. Agnes Academy in Legaspi City 31 years ago.

For tickets to the April 27 recital of Cecile Licad, call 9087222 or 09165 3051130.

"I DON'T need a husband. I just need my music."

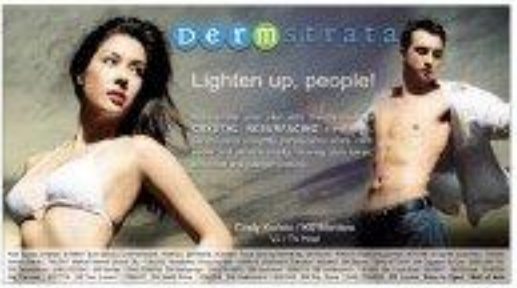


Check out these great value prepaid choices.

LIFESTYLE

"STILL Life/Kasoy" (1) Oil, by Ronnie Olazo

"TRUE Love" Part 1, by Jonathan Olazo



Mirror images

By Constantino C. Tejero

THE FATHER-AND-SON bond is exceptionally strong among families of artists, of-ten it seems like here worship.

We take as the first examples the cases of Hidalgo Enrera and sons Steve and Haley, Marcel and Angelito Antonio, Rikki and Mario Nerad, as well as Cobie and Cris Cruz, because here the sons chose obviously not to step out of their fathers' shadows.

In most cases, however, as with Michael and Tam Antonio, Nono Alvarado and sons, José Blanco and sons, and even with sculptors José Moncada and Jerry Acuna and their sons, the art of the offspring appears like a natural extension of the father's.

An interesting artistic evolution is similarly happening with Ronnie Olazo and his son Jonathan.

The older Olazo is now seen in his place in the patchwork of second-generation Filipino modernists, having found a niche in landscape painting and printmaking and being easily recognizable for his "Elephantine" imagery. The younger one, a bold experimentalist in multimedia, is among the vanguard of contemporary Philippine art.

The two are holding their fourth joint exhibit, "Olazo & Olazo," 17 pieces in all on canvas, 26 in mixed media on canvas and 15 on paper, and six installations, until May 5 in Galleria Duranila, 2316 Leong St., San Rafael, Pinay City.

Here, the younger Olazo works in pure abstraction (color field, broad brushstrokes, graffiti), while the older's art is quasi-abstract (semi-figurative). Continuing Form One

ARROW-D

"STILL Life Kasoy" (1) (111), by Ronnie Olazo

"SEMI-a Swell in the Photo," by Jonathan Olazo

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VISUAL ARTS

"SAMMANDE"

Sillada at Art Center

Multimedia artist Danny Casiñhoan Sillada's exhibit, "D.C. Sillada," is now being held at the Art Center at Old Magsaysay. His multimedia artwork 2005 painting "Manchurian Portrait of Political History" is displayed along with his works from 1998 to 2006. Ruling from Neo-Classic Sillada's earlier performances artist and social commentator. He received the Outstanding Centennial Awards in the literary and visual arts. E-mail sillada21@gmail.com or call the Mandaluyong Heritage Gallery at 5042118.

Tiangco at SOS

Sheila Tiangco presents "Sabanah," which depicts the beauty and richness of Sabah, Malaysia. Her exhibit opens on April 25 and p.m. and runs until May 4 in Gallery SOS, 45, Maningit-Lantana Mall. Edsa cor. Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City. Call 5315190 to 96.

"SABANAH"

Faber-Castell workshops in Visayas

Faber-Castell will hold five art workshops for children 8-12 years old at SM City Cebu. The morning workshops is on April 28-29. The pencil-making, video-shooting and basic art lessons are on April 30-May 1. No pre-registration is required. Fabor-Castell will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call 253 0361 to 62.

Pardo de Leon at Finale

UNTITLED

On view until May 9 in Finale Art Gallery (G/F SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong City), is the exhibit of Leo's "Pieces of Paradise." Navigating the space between the figurative and the abstract, this exhibit positively presents the artist's commitment to color and devotion to detail as ways with artists to infuse both fine and form and abstract solutions with a continuous, mesmerizing and spiritually tough quality. Call 5350111.

Austria lectures at Bulacan university

Artist-author Toni P. Austria autographs a copy of his book on aesthetics after delivering a lecture at the Bulacan State University's College of Architecture and Fine Arts. Bulacan artists and educators such as Nap Salumat, Debra Jocson, Danny Dangan, Edson Cruz and Al Perez welcomed Austria.

Spectrum artists at Glorietta

Spectrum Group artists Red Benson, Sonia Moreno, Dino and Diego Cruz are holding a show of their recent works at the Art Center (2/F, Glorietta 1, Ayala Center, Makati). Ben-son paints his figures who are engaged in work or extravagant pastime, done in the cool style and with bold strokes and primary colors. Moreno paints flowers, mostly in the tropical variety, blending touches of realism and expressionism. Dino Cruz works in bold colors, developing sculptural rendering of the human form with fresh impression on how space is interpreted. Diego works in the ethereal multimedia style, mixing watercolor with oil and acrylic spare strokes of figurines. The Cruz sisters are children of artist Eudoro Velasco. The exhibit runs until May 1.

"ONE-6703 Gnadana," by Red Benson

"SHADOW Play"

Conception at Hues

Joe Concepcion hosts a one-man exhibition at Galleria Duo (2/ NC Bonifacio Drive), Port Area, Manila. Titled Bonifacio: Tagalog City.

Boracay's allure captured in

By Gino Gonzalez
Contributor

WE ARRIVED IN BORACAY VIA SEAPLANE A week ahead of holiday revelers. Having flouted to Antique's Iloilo Pacific, our host hotel, we endured that the days leading to Holy Week were, indeed, the best time to revel in the spirit of fun and freedom that pervaded the island resort.

Formerly known as Pink Pearls, the Iloilo Pacific has been renovated. It just opened its eight Bellavista Grotto, showcasing the brand-new Alpha Capacity dry bar annex, and the all-suited hotels it by the poolside, featuring no less than a premium, homegrown talent. Antonio Calvo San José Jr., and his recent oeuvre on view.

Model and television personality Mark Nelson and his fiancée, together with last year's Ms. Earth, Priscilla Meirelles, joined Bellavista's Wang, and this writer had been invited to cut the ribbon for the formal opening.

The hotel's owners, Charlie Ty and Raquel "Kelly" Romero, were among the first to have foreshadowed Boracay's bright future, with their devotion to open a hotel in seaside Iloilo town. Two decades later, their modest investment has, as with the entire island resort, grown immensely.

They happen to have lured back an excellent chef who had gone to Germany and worked in its most exclusive hotel. Being an Iloilo native, the resident hero likewise Carlo Lee, and their faith, with local talents like San José, formerly a fashion designer and

RIBBON CUTTING at Pinto Pacific

"BORACAY Family," by Antonio San Jose

"BORACAY Family" 2

stylist who had lived in Berlin for six years, finished a course in fashion design, and worked as artist and illustrator in Paris, at the House of Daniel Hechter.

The artist had to come home for good, upon his mother's admonition, first to work as visual merchandising manager in various apparel companies, and later as illustrator and designers styles for glossy women's magazines.

Since 1998, he has spent time painting for island's manifold beauty, its sun-dappled beaches and sun-worshipping revelers.

His first major exhibition, under the auspices of Pinto Pacific, consists of paintings of bathing beauties who had gamely posed for the artist.

Pop art

With the fresh foliage as backdrop, his shiny, vibrant hues, colorful, effervescent Pop Art-Gauguin-esque.

San José, to the background inspiration for his attempt to capture the island.

The subject has impulses with their in every frame. needless to say, even if limited to given the artist his material.

Each more exquisite which has paintings, artist home by the best Boracay folk, the who are of tomorrow.

These scenes merchant, fisherman, glossy fine tuned these foreigners.

What makes Cristine says he is an of his subject naive and genre turning the boat, tures, each one to the viewer's e gauge that one is

E-mail author

"HOLIN"

Vista off to Singapore

RENOWNED VISTA GOES INTERNATIONAL AS he flies to Singapore this April to be the artist-in-residence at the Artemas Gallery. He is set to paint several works while he stays in Antique for three weeks in preparation for his major solo exhibition scheduled in Singapore in June.

Based on the artist's perspective, Iloilo will be unique to interpret Singaporean culture as well as the Singaporean way of life of the culture and culture is with Filipinos are through his visible expression. He will also facilitate an art workshop for Singaporean and additional students.

One of Iloilo, Legaspi's, top figurative artists, Vista gained recognition for his larger-than-life depictions of the Filipino way of life, highlighting the rich customs and traditions of Filipinos and the humanity of rural folk.

In Manila, Vista is represented by Galeria Joaquin. He will join the thematic group exhibition on music titled "La Musique IV" which will open at Galeria Joaquin in San Juan on May 15.

Vista was a scholar of the Saturday Group of Artists under National Artist Cesar Legaspi. He took up Fine Arts at University of Santo Tomas. He is a founding member of the Guerrero Group of Artists.

"HARVEST"

SATURDAY Group at Artists after using Dorse Beach Pen in a demo

HALAMI Cohen (the art lecturer) ...

MARCELO Balderosa explores the use of the new pen.

Saturday Group tries new art medium

WITH SOME AS CABRIEL, THE SATURDAY Group of Artists, with chief executive Marara Malang Santos and president Ruth Cervantes, dabbled in some art tool, Chaira Beach Pen, since community used as a fabric and household cleaner.

"It's a merchandised medium. None of us here has done anything like this," says Cervantes. Instead of using conventional canvas, the artists worked on stretched-out denim and replaced various dreams.

Participants were Mick Mauregaya, Ben Salinas, Anna de Leon, Ito Barbosa, Rudy Lansal, Cris Cruz, Jose Dagdagan, Danny Pelagio, Bing Sindic, Ben Pulido, Frank Cana, Sonie Patricio, Erick Pasay, Noel Obemio, Andy Ong, Arsidio Blanco, Roland Santos, Carlo Orgalingcio, Dilg Baldiga and Marcelo Balderosa.

The new art tool is dual-tipped for contoured convenience. The fine point is for precise paint strokes or for tiny fabric strains between stripes, while the acrylic-like brush-tip is for broader applications.

The pen works like magic. Even worth elusive designers' hard fingers appear on denim on the spot. Students in schools and establishments can use it for easy maintenance of clothes, and to stylize denim outfits. So, create statements on T-shirts, design their bedrooms' walls first, and personalize bags and pillows.

It can be easily tucked in a pocket or in the bag for quick, stress-free cleanups, and on-the-spot art projects.

Cervantes points out how the process of brush art is similar to printmaking, and "yes it feels and very distinct," hinting that "it might develop into an original form of art."

Mirror images

From page E1

"TRUE Love" Part 2, by Jonathan Dilao

would be fruits, leaves, flowers, human flesh. In their merging of discordant aesthetics, Cuban said not to have a particular heading.

At first glance, the father's fearsome technique, the pastry of line and wanda-esque of form, appears in direct contrast to the son's roughshod brushwork. It is distance, however, the respective pieces look like dimorphisms or diametrical mirror images of one another.

In fact, many of the son's pieces seem to be a reworking of his father's paintings. The way Picasso reworked "Las Meninas. Witness, for example, his "True Love" (Part 2 and see if it's not a reworking of his father's "Elephantine" 574.

Also, the yellow shapes on green background in the father's "Still Life: Kanga" (1979) is reversed in the white mask with blue strokes of his "Bend a Bend1 to the Moon."

Despite the titles of his pieces such as "Holy Smoke" and "Tattoo Love," when they're put side by side with his father's, the viewer instinctively becomes a formalist. You don't think whether the young Olaco is going for someone or punishing something. You just want to see whether his rough brushstroke has as much impact and appeal as his father's precise line.

For investigate whether he uses the same intensity of anti-genre as his father's, or if the liberation of his piece is the same degree as his father's. There was, but that's the way it is.

Mentored by Victorio Edades and Diosdado Lorenzo in University of Santo Tomas, Romulo Olaco has emerged as a rigid formalist. Mentored by such a visionary as Antonio Chabet in University of the Philippines, Jonathan naturally pushes art that's striking in the colorful.

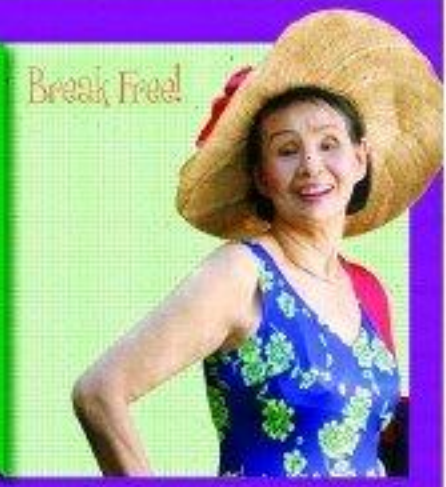
Romulo, now 72, received the "Distinguished Artists Award from the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1973, when he was 38. Jonathan, 37, got it in 1999, when he was only 28, the youngest to have done so.

"DALPHANGGE" 574, by Romulo Olaco

art

Break Free!

This is the break I deserve.



Others would always tell me to take it easy. They said I am more at risk of breaking my hip or other bones during my postmenopausal age because of osteoporosis. Give me a break! Through effective medical treatment, I gave osteoporosis a permanent vacation so I could take a break that I truly deserve. Break free from this disease. Take the non-invasive, painless and safe Bone Mass Density Test to check if you have osteoporosis. Ask your doctor on what can be done to help you live **Life-to-the Max** without osteoporosis.

For more information on the Life-to-the Max program, call hotline number 878 6308.
You may also send inquiries or fax number 885 0775

Life without osteoporosis

Life-to-the-max

A Healthcare Info Program of [illegible] and Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation, Inc.

Get 3 MEGA magazines for FREE
upon first use of your Metrobank Femme Visa!

Woman on top

Femme Visa

4 days of sizzling savings at SM supermalls

April ends and May begins with red-hot price breaks on great selections of merchandise at five SM Supermalls during the weekend of April 28, 29,and 30, and on Monday, May 1.

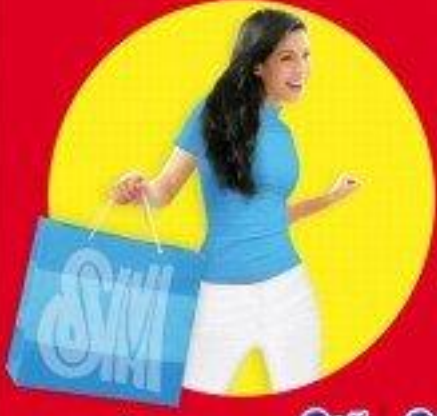
The 4-day sale event is happening at SM Megamall, SM City Bacoor, SM City Batangas, SM City Baguio and SM City Davao.

3+1 day sale

apr 28 • 29 • 30
may 1

mall hours: 10am-10pm

up to 50% OFF
great selections mallwide



MEGAMALL | SM BACOOR | SM BATANGAS | SM BAGUIO | SM DAVAO

WIN NEW AUDIO!

Besides the big buys at big savings, shoppers at all five malls get a chance to win one of many **JVC Digital Audio Players** at stake in the raffle event.

Every P500 single or accumulated purchase (cash or charge) from SM Department Store, SM Supermarket or from any participating mall establishment entitles a shopper to one (1) raffle coupon.

SM Megamall

One of the most popular shopping malls in Metro Manila, SM Megamall promises lots of great shopping and dining moments during the 3+1 Day Sale!

The Megastrip beckons with its tasty selections of restaurant cuisine and coffee shop specialties.

The coolest place to surf the net is here. Get wired to the latest gadgets and gizmos, and get trendy with the latest mobile phones. All these are up for grabs at level 4, building B of SM Megamall.

You'd rather bowl than shop? Then "Bahada Boun Tess" is for you.Enjoy 1 hour bowling and meals plus Pepsi with your barkada at discounted rates!

SM City Bacoor

One-stop shopping for a wide variety of bargain buys on apparel, fashion accessories, home furnishings, baby essentials and much much more at SM City Bacoor!

WIN one of 10 units
JVC Digital Audio Players in the daily raffle from April 28 to May 1 at SM City Bacoor.

SM City Batangas

Aside from exciting bargain shopping and fun dining, it's SM Storyland's 10th Birthday! Come, party with Lionel, Ellie, Eggbert and Sgt. Marsh! We're celebrating All Things Ten! If you're 10 years old or if you come in groups of 10, you get a surprise gift at SM City Batangas!

SM City Baguio

It's 3 days-plus-one of cool buys on April 28,29,30 and May 1. City of Pines locals and summer visitors will surely enjoy the value offers in store for them mallwide at SM City Baguio.

SM City Davao

In addition to big savings and great food treats, you can

WIN one of 10 units
JVC Digital Audio Players in the daily raffle from April 28 to April 30 at SM City Davao.

SM Food Court
Take time out from bargain hunting and treat yourself to great food at the SM Food Court. Recharge your family with their delicious selection of Filipino, Chinese and other food dishes.

Watch a movie during the sale with the "One, Two, Three, FREE" promo! Come in groups of 4 and get your cinema tickets for the price of 3! Promo valid only during the 3-day sale.

Buy an SM Cinema ticket with Tickatel, the country's FIRST mobile cinema ticketing.

Phone, your Ticket